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FRANK WESTWORTH

WINTER DRAWERS ON

I DO BELIEVE I have just returned from my first ride of the new winter. Winters run over the end of the old/start of the New Year, so it's not too easy to date them conventionally. This year's first winter ride was remarkable in that it took place in mid-September. That's about two months early. If I try very hard I could begin to believe in climate change... were it not for the sad fact that I can remember an awful lot of very wet and unseasonably freezing rides in decades past.

However, this particularly unjolly couple of hundred miles was more remarkable because I got entirely soaked. I'm not entirely familiar with this experience, as most of my touring mileage is typically spent behind a big fairing, which eases the strain on the riding gear more than somewhat when the heavens decide that we should have monsoons in the UK as well as in faraway lands. Not this year. My bike of the weekend had a handlebar screen, which is fine for rain of the persistent variety and my kit copes with what escapes the screen, but no screen can handle the celestial hosepipe when it's turned full on and hurled down from the heavens with some remarkable violence. I was soaked within a couple of dozen miles. Soaked... not damp, not wet, but soaked. My boots filled up with water, my shoulders and chest were awash, my gloves could have irrigated a desert. An interesting experience after years of full fairings.

It was also faintly humbling, not least because I tend to sneer pompously whenever the topic of chat turns to riding kit. Mine is mostly very old and decently waterproof, so I can be insulting and condescending to my little heart's content. Not today. Not at all today in fact. Not only was I sodden but I was also frozen, which is rare indeed.

By the time I'd squelched back to gale- and storm-lashed Cornwall, I had decided that I plainly needed a complete set of new riding kit. I enjoy hunting for stuff like that, so it wasn't a problem, merely an expense in waiting. After a scalding shower and a restorative soup, I took the time to check out the clothes beneath the outerwear, to see whether there were patterns to the soak, where there were lessons to learn.

Of course there were. The waterproof over-trousers hadn't leaked. If they'd leaked then the thighs of my trousers would have been wet, and they were not. What had in fact happened was that water had wicked up from the joins between boot and trouser leg. Similarly, the arms of my shirt were dry, so the fabric of the jacket had not leaked. But my back and chest were swamped with water running around my neck and down.

So... instead of asking you to recommend waterproof riding gear, can you instead suggest how to seal those leaks? Do not, please, suggest gaffer tape...

That's it. See you out there.

Frank Westworth
editor@classicbikeguide.com

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EDITOR || Frank Westworth
editor@classicbikeguide.com

PUBLISHER || Tim Hartley
thartley@mortons.co.uk

SENIOR DESIGNER || Kelvin Clements

DESIGNER || Michael Baumber

PICTURE DESK || Paul Fincham, Jonathan Schofield

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT || Jayne Clements

PRODUCTION EDITOR || Sarah Palmer

DIVISIONAL ADVERTISING MANAGER || David England
01507 529438 dengland@mortons.co.uk

ADVERTISING || Sue Needham, Leon Currie
01507 524004 sneedham@mortons.co.uk
lcurrie@mortons.co.uk

ARCHIVE ENQUIRIES || Jane Skayman
01507 529423 jsayman@mortons.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER || Paul Deacon

CIRCULATION MANAGER || Steven O'Hara

MARKETING MANAGER || Charlotte Park

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR || Dan Savage

COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR || Nigel Hole

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR || Malc Wheeler

CONTRIBUTORS IN THIS ISSUE

Alan Cathcart, George Cohen, Steve Cooper, Kay Eldridge, Grant Ford, Martin Gelder, Rowena Hoseason, Richard Jones, Louise Limb, Phil Mather, Frank Melling, Paul d'Orléans, Mike Powell, Mark Williams, Nolan Woodbury

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

Mortons Media Group, Media Centre, Morton Way,
Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR

WEBSITE

www.classicbikeguide.com

GENERAL QUERIES AND BACK ISSUES

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Web: www.classicmagazines.co.uk

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NEWS || EVENTS || LETTERS || INTERVIEWS



BEEZUMPH24

Club rally, classic trackday and a stonking celebration of BSA and Triumph triples, all rolled into one weekend in the wolds

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY MARTIN GELDER

BEEZUMPH IS THE MAIN EVENT in the Trident & Rocket 3 Owners' Club calendar. It kicks off on Friday with a ride through the Lincolnshire Wolds, follows up with track action on Saturday and then closes with the club celebrations on Saturday night. It's a coming together of all things BSA and Triumph triple related, be they the production-line models, the Rob

EVENT
CLUB
REPORT



North and performance specials or the Cardinal and Legend variants.

It's a laid-back, mellow affair. Some come simply for the track day – other marques are more than welcome and there seems to be a hardcore of regulars who do all the classic track days – while others are content to pitch their tents and spend the time socialising and putting the two-wheeled world to rights.

There are a handful of specialist traders as well as a sprinkling of members selling surplus parts, and for the rebuilders and restorers there's unlikely to be a better chance to check on throttle cable routing or paintcode selection. There's food and drink, a band on Saturday night, a judged concours bike line-up and guests from the factory and race teams of the triple's heyday.

If you own a BSA or Triumph triple, or if you're thinking of buying one, you should be at Beezumph. If you couldn't be there this year, here are some of the bikes that caught the *CBG* eye.



GO COMMANDO

Creating café cred
P34



WAR BABY

SA's solid sidevalve
40



HONDA DESERT SLED

Get some air!
P46

TRIUMPH T160

BEEZUMPH IS THEMED each year. This time round it was all about celebrating 40 years of the T160, so we tried to find a standard example of the model. Well, almost standard. Perhaps because of the nature of classic triple owners, perhaps because the base model had so much potential, or perhaps because most of the bikes at the rally are set up to be used, it proved quite difficult to find a basic, standard, T160.

Ray McIntyre's 1975 model is as good a place as any to start. It's set up for riding – Ray is more than happy to take the Trident on foreign tours – and apart from the twin discs and aftermarket exhausts it's the paint job which really sets it apart, for which credit must go to previous owner Mike Lockhart.

The T160 was arguably one of the best-looking 1970s British bikes, and the slightly redder-than-the-standard-maroon metallic shade of Ray's bike emphasises the sleek shape of the tank. A few yards away another variation on the theme was glinting in the sun and is now hopefully pictured nearby, with red and white flashes replacing the standard white-tanked models' yellow highlights. When a bike looks this good, why would you change it?



PRESS BIKE & PROTOTYPE

SQUIRRELLED AWAY in the club tent at the top of the rally field were two interesting and unique pieces of T160 history; a bike from the original T160 press fleet and the National Motorcycle Museum's 'Trisolastic' prototype. A friend of current owner, Phil Pick, bought KAA 247N from Slocombes in Neasden in around 1978, shortly after NVT was finally liquidated. It had been one of the original road test bikes loaned to the press, along with another T160 Trident (KAA 248N) and a Mk.III Norton Commando (KAA 246N) but was sold without the factory history as a normal secondhand bike. It was used on the road for the next 15 years and then left in damp storage until Phil rescued it in 2003.

Phil describes it as 'ripe for restoration'; hopefully any work done will not only be sympathetic to the bike's history but will also reveal the extent to which press fleet bikes deviated from the

production line standards.

By the mid-1970s the Norton twin was approaching the end of its life and the idea of fitting a T160 engine into an isolastic Commando frame was mooted. A 900cc engine was prepared and a prototype built at the Kitts Green workshop in 1975-76. Despite being a slightly rough-edged development prototype, it apparently went well and had good road holding. The bike passed into private hands in 1978 and is now on display at the National Motorcycle Museum.

The triple engine looks comfortably at home in the twin's frame, but with the BSA and Triumph ranges already a jumble of badge engineering, would the Trisolastic Triple have been a step too far? While admiring the resourcefulness of the team at Kitts Green, one has to wonder if this was the answer to a question that no one was asking.



NOCKET 3

THIS NOCKET 3 (which sounds so much better than NorBSA, don't you think?) has a number of really neat detail touches that are slightly lost in the chunky solidity of the bike as a whole. The massive alloy tank (from the Tank Shop in Dumfries) balances the bulk of the motor and the home-made seat on its XR750-style base somehow works even when it shouldn't.

Step closer and you start to notice the work that Peter Gibson has put into his bike, from the polished brass 'break glass to sound alarm' knob in the headstock to the Dresda swinging arm. "I bought a set of engine cases and a frame and built it from there," says Peter. "It originally had a Hyde 1000 kit but it wasn't quite right; it's got a Nova Racing set up now."

The Keihin carbs were originally a set of four, possibly from a Honda, bought at a bargain price from eBay. They needed a new gantry making for the throttle cables and careful setting up on a rolling road dyno by Paul Gowland, but now work well with the raygun-style three-into-one exhaust made by Peter's son.

Two more details: the Madigan clutch (won in a raffle) gives a relatively light travel and can be easily adjusted for travel and pull, and the instrument bracket is made of a single sheet of Perspex carefully (it took several attempts) bent to look just right, supported by curved brackets arcing up from the headlight.



SPECIAL BREWS

AT A RALLY where almost every bike has been modified in some way or other – whether for performance or practicality,

aesthetic originality or artistic expression – it takes something special to stand out from the crowd. One corner of the

paddock, though, was notable for the three one-off creations that had taken up residence there. They lounged casually

on their stands, confident that their uniqueness would be noticed, dissected and discussed.



Stroll casually past the right-hand side of this dohc Rocket 3 and you might miss the café racer's heavily modified motor. From the left, however, it's definitely something special; toothed belts emerge from what looks like an A10 timing case and wrap around a pair of neatly fitted overhead cams.



For the days when a double overhead cam triple isn't enough, how about a V6? And if there isn't enough room between the cylinder blocks and heads for carbs, then fuel injection is the obvious answer. The lack of clutch cable and HT leads reveal this as a work-in-progress project, but when it's finished..



HINCKLEY TRITON

DAVE MEAD'S TRITON sits in the Cadwell paddock exuding an air of world-weary menace. It looks like it means business and shows the scars of heavy road – and track – use. It takes a second or third glance to reveal that this is not a traditional Triton. In the Norton frame/Triumph engine sense of the word, then yes, it's a Triton, but it's more of a modern mash-up than the conventional cocktail.

The frame combines – merges – part of a Hinckley Triumph Tiger chassis with most of a Norton featherbed to provide a home for the Tiger triple motor. The engine mountings and swinging arm are from the Tiger, the frame loop, seat loop and headstock from the Norton. The first Hinckley Triumphs hung their engine from a backbone frame, and while the front downtubes and lower engine cradle of the featherbed frame weren't necessary for the structural integrity of the bike,



Dave added them (constructed from electrical conduit and purely aesthetic) because without them the bike looked wrong. The Triton uses Meriden Triumph forks with a 'bacon slicer' cooling rim mounted to the centre of the hub, just for the look.

The bike has been on the road since 1999 and Dave says it always draws a crowd wherever it's parked. The glassfibre tank is the third attempt at getting it right, the previous two having succumbed to ethanol in one way or another. Dave reckons it's the

vapours from evaporating fuel that do the damage as much as anything else, and if he's leaving the bike standing for any length of time he'll either drain the tank or at the very least leave the filler cap open to allow the harmful vapours to vent.



Not a triple, but from the same George Pooley stable as the twin cam and V6 BSAs comes this twin-engined, four cylinder Triumph 1500. A lot of work has gone into making it look like the sort of thing Triumph might have made itself, although it might have gone a bit easier with the lightening drill.

CLASSIC RACER



THIS TRIUMPH T150 comes with history, having previously been owned by renowned lightweight triple builder Alastair Laurie. Its pared-to-the-bone attitude is emphasised by the chunky barrel finning and the space around the vertical cylinder block, framed by the triangulated chassis.

It's now campaigned in classic racing in Scotland by Grant Farquharson, who also rides a standard road Trident that he's owned from new in 1975. The race bike's engine was rebuilt for racing by Angus MacDonald, with its 1000cc capacity coming from a Hyde bore and stroke kit. The rest of the engine's internals are largely standard, as required by the race regulations, but Grant reckons it's more fun to ride than his modern Aprilia Tuono.



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WINTER DRAWERS ON

TWO NEW CLOTHING COLLECTIONS from Triumph Motorcycles have just gone on sale, intended to keep you warm and dry this winter, on and off the bike.

They've themed the new kit around two ranges, called 'Customisation' and 'Restore'. The Customisation collection is all about expressing your individuality (while presumably hoping that your best mate hasn't bought an identical shirt), and includes hoodies, sweatshirts and tees, along with the buffalo leather Custom Riding Jacket (£325) with certified Knox armour and 'monochrome patches'.

The Restore range takes its inspiration from day-to-day workwear and is ideal for wet weekends in the garage. The

Axel Tee and Brock Tee (both £28) are among several items featuring vintage motorcycle designs to showcase Triumph's heritage. The Restore Jacket (£210) offers an alternative to leather riding gear, boasting a coated Bristex outer fabric and a waterproof, windproof and breathable fixed Tritex liner as well as removable armour.

If you plan on clocking up serious miles in inclement conditions, then the new Triumph Barbour Jacket combines the best of traditional waxed cotton and modern protection. Available for both men and women, the Triumph Barbour costs £320 and £300 respectively.

The complete clothing collection can be viewed at triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

THAT'S HANDY

MOUSTACHE WAXED? MUDGUARDS BOBBED?

Tan saddle installed? Well then, you need one final item to complete your hipster appearance – a set of traditional Nut Brown riding gloves. This ever-popular classic favourite has been updated by Davida with Kevlar stitching and a snug fleece lining with smooth, supple cowhide, to create a simple and uncomplicated short-cuff glove which provides maximum tactile comfort and great dexterity.

Available in sizes from XS to 3XL, they cost £48.99 plus delivery.

See davida.co.uk



FUEL PROOF

FRUSTRATED WITH POOR FUELLING on their own Moto Guzzi 1200 Griso, the guys at Gutsibits have finally found a proper solution. They've been investigating fuel-enriching widgets, and have uncovered the BoosterPlug. Unlike other plug'n'play mixture enrichers, the BoosterPlug has a temperature sensor so it works really well in most weather conditions, from minus-20C to plus-40C. It's available for Guzzi models manufactured since 2004, and Gutsibits reckon it will 'transform your Guzzi' for under £100. See guzzi.bike



BETTER BRAKE BITS

SOURCING BRAKING COMPONENTS can be a struggle. The correct parts are often hard to specify correctly, they're individually expensive and tricky to find.

Wemoto stocks a comprehensive range of quality brake components from a number of leading brands, easily accessible by exact marque and model, available as individual components to full servicing kits. Sintered and standard pads are stocked; retaining pins and clips are also available, as are brake shoes for earlier models. A choice of EBC or Kyoto brake discs can also be found in both wavy and standard profiles.

If you know you need to do a complete overhaul, Wemoto's brake service kits provides a one-click solution which includes master cylinder, calliper and piston repair kits. Complete master cylinders are available, along with complete callipers, calliper mounting bolts and stainless steel pistons. You'll also find straightforward solutions to common problems. A Wemoto combined bleed nipple and banjo bolt, for example, allows for bleeding to take place at the banjo when the original bleed nipple has become stuck or broken in the calliper.

Braided hoses can offer a fuss-free

route to improved braking, especially on older systems, and Wemoto only stocks braided steel brake lines which resist distortion under pressure and high temperatures, transferring braking power more efficiently under all conditions. You can make your own brake lines with Goodridge BuildaLine, or buy a custom made HEL hose. Manufactured in-house, HEL hoses come in a huge range of colours, from lime green to carbon fibre finish, and with a selection of different fittings. TUV approved, they come with a life-time warranty.

Wemoto holds a comprehensive stock of the smaller and rarer brake system parts like shaft boots, piston seals, bleed nipple covers, rubber grease, electrical and hydraulic brake switches. Most parts that make up brake service kits can also be purchased individually. A range of brake cleaning and maintenance fluids is available, as well as some useful service tools like a brake piston detaching tool and pliers with a safety lock, which make brake calliper mounting an easier and less exasperating job.

So now there's absolutely no excuse for spongy brakes or seeping hydraulics... See wemoto.com

LUCAS LAMPS

AFTER MANY YEARS of being out of stock or unavailable, genuine Lucas 5¾in headlamp shells are once again being manufactured. Available in all chrome or black with a chrome rim, they feature 5/16in mounting holes and are embossed with the name Lucas. Many BSA and Triumphs of the late 1960s and 1970s were fitted with these headlamps, and they also happen to suit café racers and customs as well as trials bikes. Electrical specialist Paul Goff can supply the headlamps bare for £42.95.

Alternatively they come as complete headlamp assemblies with lens/reflector, mounting clips, quartz halogen bulbs and holders in British pre-focus or the more modern H4 types in 6V or 12V, all for £82.95. See norbsa02.freeuk.com



SEE YOU AT STAFFORD

THIS AUTUMN'S STAFFORD SHOW will be more than a little out of the ordinary.

As usual, it takes place at Stafford County Showground, from 9am on Saturday and Sunday, October 17-18. As usual, the various halls, marquees and surrounding grounds will be jam-packed full of classic bikes, jumble, traders, specialists and live action displays – including pre-65 trials demonstrations, classic racers being fired up in the paddock, an outdoor cavalcade of classics where owners show off their prized possessions, and extensive club stands hosting hundreds of original and restored

old bikes. So far, business as usual...

Unusually, this *Classic Motorcycle Mechanics* Show will also incorporate a special Bonhams auction on the Saturday, where an outstanding collection of 60 rare, mostly American, machines will go under the hammer. The main sale of vintage and collectible motorcycles will take place on the Sunday, and you can see some of the early entries pictured here.

We'll definitely be watching the bidding on the 1978 Rob North Trident racer; taken out to 974cc, this beast has won more than its fair share of CRMC races and is

expected to sell for between £8000 and £12,000. If your tastes tend towards the earlier half of the 20th century, then check out the 1939 Ariel Square Four. It's one of the earlier generation of Squares – so not a 4G 1000cc model – but instead combines the 600 engine with Anstey link rear suspension. It was fully restored back in 1981, was recommissioned a couple of years ago, and MoT'd in 2012. Sale estimate is around £15k... but we think it'll go for more than that.

Fans of rare early Japanese machines will also have the opportunity to bid on a real rarity, in the shape of a 1965 500cc Marusho Lilac. The horizontally-opposed twin is of considerable technical interest as it uses Marusho's own clutch and transmission design, and novel ignition and electrical systems. Be prepared to pay around £5000 if you want to take it home with you.

Then there are the other highlights of the show to look out for, including:

THE RESTORATION THEATRE which will be hosted by that Pete Thorne off the telly box. Pete will be on stage at various times throughout the weekend presenting information and advice on key restoration and maintenance issues.

GUZZI ENTHUSIASTS should detour via the Footman James stand to gaze in awe at two machines on loan from the Sammy





Miller museum. The exotic 1958 V8 will be presented next to the 1950 'Bicilindrical' V-twin, the first time these two unique machines have appeared together at an international show.

THE PANTHER PUBLISHING stand will launch a new title, *Where BSAs Dare* by Norman Vanhouse, which reveals the behind-the-scenes secrets of the firm's 1952 ISDT and Maudes Trophy wins. Norman Vanhouse's son Graham, who found his father's manuscript and prepared it for

publication, will be present, together with one of the restored bikes and – if insurance conditions allow – the Maudes trophy itself.

ROAD-RACING LEGEND John

McGuinness will headline the event, with the 23-time TT winner taking his place as guest of honour.

A veteran of 18 Isle of Man TTs, McGuinness will offer an unrivalled insight into the world's most famous motorcycle races as well as many of the many competitors, both rivals and friends, who

he's lined up against. Expect a wealth of stories from a stellar career, and an opportunity to ask questions during his interviews.

CHAT WITH CBG's editor, FrankW, who'll you'll find on the *RealClassic* magazine stand, on the balcony above the main hall, next to the bar...

Tickets for the Carole Nash Classic Motorcycle Mechanics Show cost £11 in advance or £13 on the gate.

See classicbikeshows.com

DIARYDATES

OCTOBER 4

Copdock Motorcycle Show,
Trinity Park, Ipswich, IP3 8UH.
copdockmotorcycleshow.co.uk

OCTOBER 9-11

Veterama autojumble,
Mannheim, Germany.
veterama.de

OCTOBER 11

Newark Autojumble, Newark
and Notts Showground,
NG24 2NY. 01507 529470
[/ newarkautojumble.co.uk](http://newarkautojumble.co.uk)

OCTOBER 14

Brit Bike Night, Ace Café,
London NW10 7UD.
020 8961 1000 /
ace-café-london.com

OCTOBER 16-18

Classic Track Days, at
Snetterton with the NMM
Friends. 08451 252646

OCTOBER 17-18

**Classic Motorcycle Mechanics
Show,** Stafford. 01507 529529
[/ classicbikeshows.com](http://classicbikeshows.com)

OCTOBER 17

Scorton Autojumble,
North Yorks Events Centre,
DL10 6EJ.
07909 904705

**Bonhams Auction of the
Lonati Collection,**
Mechanics Show, Stafford.
bonhams.com / 0208 963 2817

Cheffins Auction, the
saleground, Sutton,
near Ely, CB6 2QT.
01223 213777
[/ cheffins.co.uk](http://cheffins.co.uk)

OCTOBER 18

**Bonhams Auction
of collectors' motorcycles,**
Mechanics Show,
Stafford.
bonhams.com
/ 0208 963 2817

OCTOBER 24

Kempton Park Autojumble,
Sunbury on Thames
TW16 5AQ.
01344 883961
[/ egp-enterprises.co.uk](http://egp-enterprises.co.uk)

OCTOBER 25

**South of England Classic
Bike Show,** Ardingly, RH17
6TL. elk-promotions.co.uk

**Rat, Brat, Bobbers & Choppers
Day,** Ace Café, London
NW10 7UD. 020 8961 1000
[/ ace-café-london.com](http://ace-café-london.com)

OCTOBER 29-NOVEMBER 1

**International Dirt Bike
Show,** Stoneleigh Park,
CV8 2LZ. 01507 529529
[/ dirtbikeshow.co.uk](http://dirtbikeshow.co.uk)

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BRUM'S BRITISH BIKE BONANAZA



THE WORLD'S LARGEST collection of British bikes is throwing open its doors for a special shindig on Saturday, October 31.

Visitors to the National Motorcycle Museum near Birmingham are invited to visit the museum's collection of more than 1000 British classic motorcycles free of charge, and enjoy a range of special events throughout the venue's award-winning conference facilities.

The 'Stars On Stage' feature tops the bill, hosted by Carl Fogarty and Jamie Whitham. There will be two hour-long sessions, at 11am and 2pm, with these racing heroes and other motorcycling personalities. They'll fire up some of the most iconic competition machines from the museum's

inventory, and the afternoon show will see Foggy being presented with his very first motorcycle, which has just been restored by the museum's workshop.

The open day will also incorporate a large indoor autojumble, held in the warm and dry. A range of displays will showcase specialist suppliers and craftsmen, including the museum's own restoration team who'll be available to chat and answer questions. There will also be trade stands and displays, book signings, and the prize draw for the museum's summer raffle. The winning ticket will be chosen live on stage by Jamie Whitham and Carl Fogarty when the new owner of the Vincent Rapide, worth over £40,000, will be announced. If you

haven't yet bought your raffle tickets, they can be purchased from 01675 444140.

Outside, Wheels Motorcycle Training will be giving visitors the chance to try a bike for free. Anyone over 16 years old will have the opportunity to learn to ride in a controlled environment – this is a very popular feature so it's probably best to prebook with Wheels on 0121 328 9906.

The NMM shop and restaurant will be open throughout the day, offering a wide range of rare literature and memorabilia, and serving breakfast, lunch and a range of hot meals and snacks.

For further details about the open day and the NMM's normal opening hours and facilities, see thenmm.co.uk



BLOW UP

RUN OUT OF PUFF?

No problem. Sudden and unexpected deflation in the tyre dept can be rectified with a new gadget from Gear Gremlin. It's a CO₂ canister and valve adaptor which makes light work of emergency tyre inflation. Compact and light, the adaptor can be left under the seat or stowed in luggage until the moment you really need it. The adaptor suits the Schrader valves found on most bike tyres, and the gas canister fits

to it in seconds. The kit is quicker and easier to operate than a foot pump – which you're not exactly likely to carry around with you. It's ideal in situations where your rubber rapidly needs more pressure at the roadside, when dealing with a slow puncture perhaps.

The adaptor costs £6.99 and CO₂ canisters come in packs of three at £7.99 per pack. All from thekeycollection.co.uk



GET A HEADER

TARNISHED EXHAUSTS CAN blight a bike's cosmetic appeal, as can all the gubbins associated with the catalytic converter on a modern motorcycle. So if you're aiming to transform a standard Hinckley Bonnie into a sleek street custom, these new polished header pipes from Norman Hyde will come in handy.

These fit all modern T100 model Triumph Bonneville, and are made in England from 304 grade stainless steel. The pipes have an outside diameter of 42mm and are designed to fit all T100 machines, including earlier pre-injection Bonneville fitted with 38mm headers, giving them a more traditional appearance. Fitting the stainless headers to EFI models allows owners



to dispense with the protruding lambda sensors, without leaving the welded bosses that spoil the Bonneville's classic styling. The ECU can be programmed to switch off the sensors, so that performance will not be affected. These headers fit the Norman Hyde HBS105 classic and HBS165 peashooter silencers, as well as the factory-fitted Triumph originals. They cost £249 plus delivery. See normanhyde.co.uk

NATIONAL MOTORCYCLE MUSEUM LIVE FREE OPEN DAY

SATURDAY 31ST OCTOBER 2015

Utilizing both the Museum and our extensive conference facilities Saturday 31/10/15 will see the National Motorcycle Museum host our 2nd annual free open day when we will throw open the doors of the Museum and everyone will be invited to visit the Museum collection free of charge. Not only that but there will be a host of other free attractions including two amazing "Stars On Stage" events featuring the bikes, the stars and the people behind it all!



Free Museum Entry:

Everyone will be invited to visit the museum collection, free-of-charge. To assist visitors everyone arriving on site will be given a free timetable with a full list & timings of all the day's events!



Indoor Autojumble:

The event will feature a large indoor autojumble held within the warm & dry surroundings of the National Motorcycle Museum's conference facilities. For details of how to book a 6ft pitch for just £30.00 contact Steve or George on (0121) 704 2784 or e-mail sales@thenmm.co.uk

Museum Partners & Trade Displays: Throughout the day we will have special feature "tables" showcasing some of the specialist suppliers & craftsmen (including the Museum's own

restoration team) who will be available to chat and answer questions. The event will also feature trade stands & displays from many well-known names including Bonham's Auctioneers and Footman James Insurance brokers.



Stars On Stage: Hosted by Carl Fogarty & Jamie Whitham

Carl Fogarty & Jamie Whitham will host two special "Stars On Stage" features at 11.00am & 2.00pm on Saturday 31/10/15. Held on the stage of one of the Museum's magnificent suites these free 1 hour chat shows will feature both Carl & Jamie as well as other motorcycling personalities & live "fire ups" of some of the most iconic race machines from the Museum's inventory.

Motorcycle "Try a Bike" Training:

Wheels Motorcycle Training will be giving visitors the chance to "try a bike" free of charge during Saturday 31/10/15. Everyone from just 16 years of age* will have the

opportunity to learn to ride in a controlled environment. Because of this features popularity you can pre-book by contacting Wheels Motorcycle Training on 0121 328 9906 or e-mail enq@2wheelstraining.com

Celebrity Book Signings:

Various motorcycling personalities will be available to sign copies of their books in the Museum shop during the event.

Museum Shop & Restaurant:

The Museum shop and restaurant will be open throughout the day serving breakfast, lunch & a range of hot meals & snacks.

Plus The Draw For The Best Classic Motorcycle Raffle Prize In The World!



Our summer 2015 raffle to win a "Shadowised" 1947 Vincent Series B Rapide worth over £40,000 will be drawn by Carl Fogarty & Jamie Whitham live on stage during the afternoon of the Museum's open day on 31/10/15 at 3.00pm

There's still time to win this amazing prize with raffle tickets available to purchase online from www.thenmmshop.co.uk or by calling the Museum on 01675 444140

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Zed power

Four decades since its launch, the Z1 still provokes shock and awe

WORDS & PHOTOS BY NOLAN WOODBURY

■ **Above:** Move over, Honda. Kawasaki analysed the CB750 and did everything... better

■ **1:** From the front, the Big Zed needed lots of fins and four bright pipes to cut a dash in the parking lot

■ **2:** The front end shows off the 1970s chromium obsession, with plenty of allegedly enjoyable effort available for the weekend polisher

■ **3:** A simple drum performed anchorage duties round back, while the rear wheel boasted more than one security bolt to dissuade the tyres from creeping around the rim. Good move

MUCH HAS BEEN MADE of the CB750/4 beating Kawasaki to the punch in 1968, but the company also known for its heavy equipment and shipbuilding rebounded nicely. Few motorcycles have shaken the market like Honda's original *Nana-han*, but Kawasaki's annual delivery of class-leading acceleration and brawn sparked a genuine performance mystique.

Before the Z1's 1972 debut, the rival Honda was not only outclassed in a sprint against Kawasaki's rapid 750cc H2 two-stroke, but the smaller Mach III triple as well. That reflects the mighty Zed's dominance then, and explains its following now. Kawasaki has remained on topic whenever matters of speed and horsepower are discussed, and so the legend of the dohc Z1 continues to grow.

Christened 'The King' by period pressmen, the Z1's remarkable performance is made even more so considering its rather unremarkable specification. Nearly unburstable in stock form owing to its low compression figure of 8.5:1, mild cam timing, points ignition and square bore/stroke dimensions, the 903

used displacement and good breathing to provide ample passing power in top gear. A meaty band of torque is available as low as 3000rpm, but spin the engine harder and the monster awakens at six. Keep it pinned and you'll need a good grip when the tach sweeps to redline.

Deleted from the manifesto for a short time late in 1975, the Zed reappeared in 1976 as the KZ900-A4 in Canada and the USA, the Z900-A4 elsewhere. Touted as smoother and more tractable, perhaps to offset its increased price, notable changes included new colours of Diamond Dark Green and Diamond Brown with identifying details (the '900 Dual Overhead Camshaft' marking replaced with a simple 'Z900' badge) altered to reflect the Z1's refinement. New baffles reduced noise, while a redesigned airbox and side covers joined a locking fuel cap, an uprated fuse system, hazard lights, an audible flasher indicator with left and right directional lamps, plus a redesigned instrument cluster using a vertical light panel. A smaller 10-AH battery replaced the Z1's 12-AH unit.



There were no significant internal deviations from the original 903cc four, but several outward components were revised. Along with an improved linkage system, the Z1's bank of four 28mm carbs was replaced by 26mm VM26SS Mikunis for improved throttle response. The exhaust system's baffling was increased for less noise and some reports claim the Z900's frame was strengthened by using thicker-wall tubing on the mild steel frame. This was not confirmed, but it does raise an important point regarding the Z900's lone skeleton – imprecise high-speed handling. No worse surely, than the CB750 or any number of Japanese fliers not carrying the Suzuki GS750 badge, but a weakness should the Zed find itself on a twisty stretch trading jabs with, say, an Italian. Kawasaki would address this issue later, as improvements grew incrementally with each model revision.

Previously available as an extra-cost option, UK Z900s came standard with a second front disc; reduced in diameter and using a smaller caliper to curb unsprung weight. The US version carried on with a single front disc, but both retained the 200mm rear drum and stiffer rear shocks for 1976.

In an effort to clean the Z900's lines the side reflectors were redistributed to the frame and taillight lens, now squared off slightly and covered by a longer, more angular tailpiece. Max power was down only slightly at 81bhp for a claimed top speed of 135mph. Offered in 1976 as an interim before the Z1000, a few KZ900s titled for 1977 emerged from the new line in Nebraska. Many of these were the KZ900 LTD factory custom, another ground-breaking model using Zed power for motivation.

PRICE GUIDE

£8000 to £18,000
(Early models most ££)

FAULTS & FOIBLES

With increasing value comes more reason for people to fake replicas, so be certain to check history, especially on recently imported machines. Very common to dress LTD models as street Zeds. Budget big for replacement silencers. Sump baffle needs de-clogging (often overlooked)

ALSO CONSIDER

Z650 (half the oomph but similar style for a fraction of the ££). Mach IV 750 H2 (all the oomph, similar prices, similarly insane)

SPECIALIST

Rick Brett
Z Power

OWNERS' CLUB

VJMC.com

■ **4:** Has anyone started a Z900 using the kick-starter? Has anyone needed to? Thought not. Belt 'n' braces to ease customer angst



This 1975 Z1B is on sale for £11,750 at A28 Classics in Sussex. It's recently arrived from the USA, been given a thorough overhaul (inc carbs, top end, shims, camchain and wiring loom), and comes with MoT and V5C

With nearly 40 years of experience building everything from ground-pounding Harley-Davidsons to concours-winning British show bikes, TJ Jackson's Eastside Performance motorcycle emporium remains a fixture for motorcyclists of all ages and interests. Initially trained for the service of Japanese machines, Jackson raced and won often through the 1970s and 80s on his Kawasaki-powered dragbike before opening Eastside Performance in Arizona.

Wishing to focus more on his restoration business and less on the day-in-day-out of maintenance and repair, Jackson finished construction of his current facility before retiring. With fastidious attention to detail TJ now spends his days inside the workshop where this KZ was restored. "I'm a Kawasaki guy," says Jackson. "But my experience doesn't end there." Indeed, at the time of this writing TJ's laying hands



5: Side panel badging reveals this to be a US model (no 'K' in the UK), while the low-down shot shows the neat balance pipe between the silencers. Originals then...

6: From behind, only four proud pipes would do



on a classic CBX, an early GL1000 and a bleached 1972 Zed found rotting away in south Phoenix. "It'll come together," he states.

Commissioned by collector Lee Mitzel, this KZ900 was so badly rusted it was nearly broken down for parts. "It came from Michigan and was completely stock with only 10k miles on it. Remarkably intact, but very badly weathered," recalls Jackson. "The owner was ready to pitch it, but after some discussion we decided otherwise. The job required



MANUFACTURED: 1973 to 76 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled ohc inline four
BORE / STROKE: 66x66mm **CAPACITY:** 903cc **COMPRESSION:** 8.5:1
POWER: 85bhp@8500rpm **TORQUE:** 54lb-ft@7000rpm **CARBURETION:** 4x VM28 Mikuni
IGNITION: Battery/coil **STARTING:** Electric/kick **CLUTCH:** Wet, multi-plate
PRIMARY DRIVE: Gear **FINAL DRIVE:** Simplex chain **FRONT BRAKE:** Single 296mm disc,
two piston caliper **REAR BRAKE:** 200mm drum **FRONT SUSPENSION:** 36mm hydraulic damped
forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm, twin shock, five-way preload adjustment **FRONT**
TYRE: 3.25x19 **REAR TYRE:** 4.00x18 **WHEELBASE:** 1491mm **WEIGHT:** 230kg **GROUND**
CLEARANCE: 6.75in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 32in **FUEL ECONOMY:** 48mpg average **BRAKING:**
29ft from 30mph **ACCELERATION:** Standing quarter-mile in 12.61s **TOP SPEED:** 135mph

sourcing a great many NOS parts, like the exhaust system." Finding that proved difficult for Jackson, who repeatedly combed through his contacts until a new set turned up. "There's a re-pops for the Z1, but the one fitted to the KZ900 is different, likewise with the paint. Duplicating the KZ900 green was tricky; there are no paint codes for it. Other items, like the four-way flasher switch and the turn signal beeper, were very difficult to find. The KZ900 is more of a challenge owing to a lack of correct reproduction pieces... something the Z1 has a plethora of."

The finished product is quite amazing to behold. This KZ900 looks, runs, and smells like a brand new motorcycle. "I prefer the clean look of the Z900 suspension and the improved drivability, but favour the Z1's rounded tail and tail lamp," says Jackson.

"I'm happy that Lee sees things like I do. I've done several bikes for him and he relies on me to take them to a very high standard. He also expects to be able to ride the bike at any time so mechanical and cosmetic standards are equally important. This has a full engine overhaul, suspension rebuild, all the way. Every fastener was either replaced or re-plated. The only departure from stock is powder coating on all black chassis parts for durability. I'm a stickler for items such as fasteners and correct wiring. To me, a correct restoration is a bike as capable of being used as one in the showroom. No trailer queens. No lipstick makeovers."

It certainly seems worth it. The Z900 held off all challengers for the four years between 1973 and 1977. A full second quicker in the quarter-mile than anything else, it took the combined efforts of the Yamaha XS Eleven, Honda CBX and Suzuki GS1000 to wrestle the Zed's performance crown away. A great relief, no doubt, to Kawasaki's competitors. Truly, nothing since the Z1 has dominated the industry so decisively for that long. All hail the king. **CRIC**

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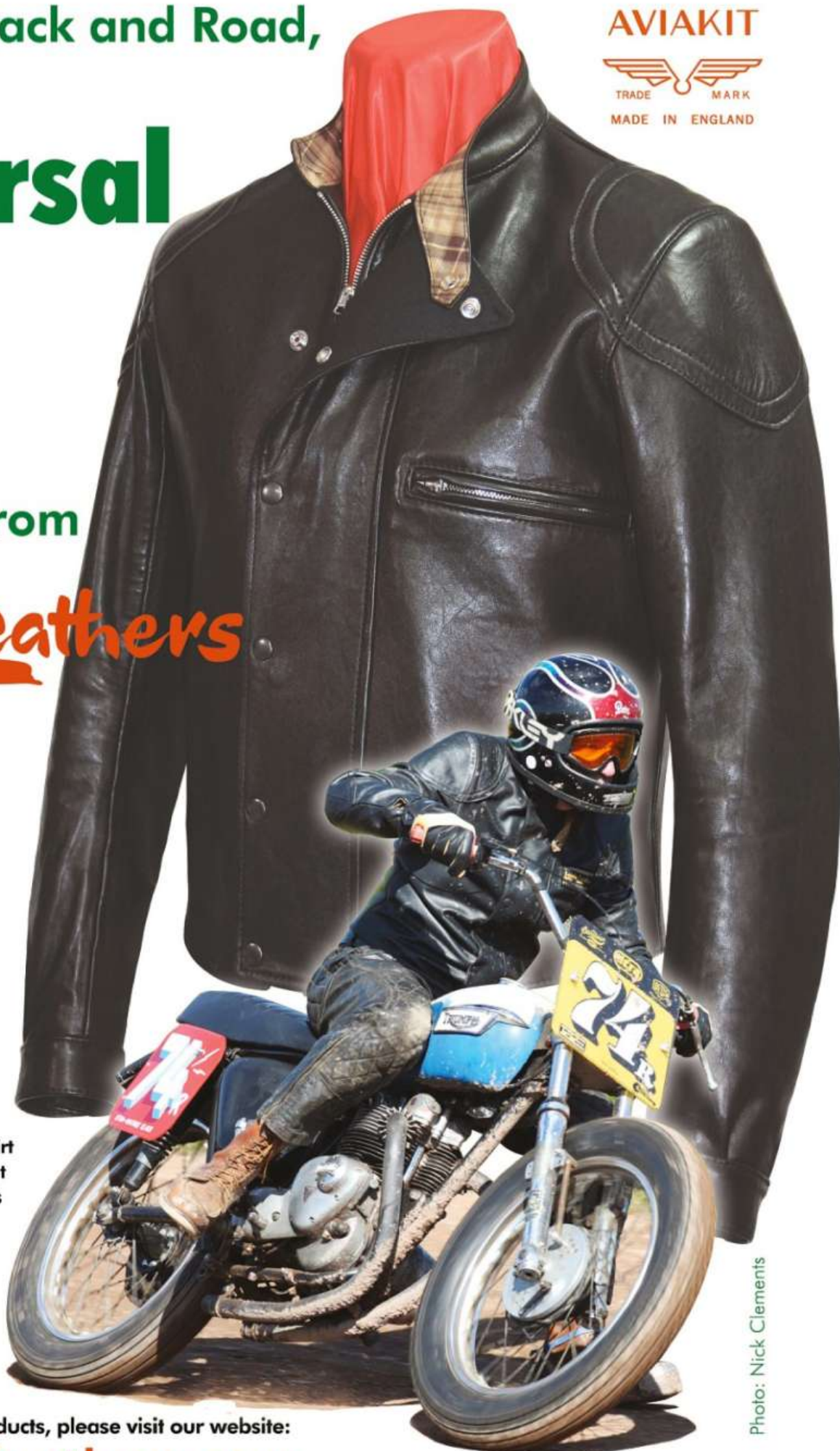
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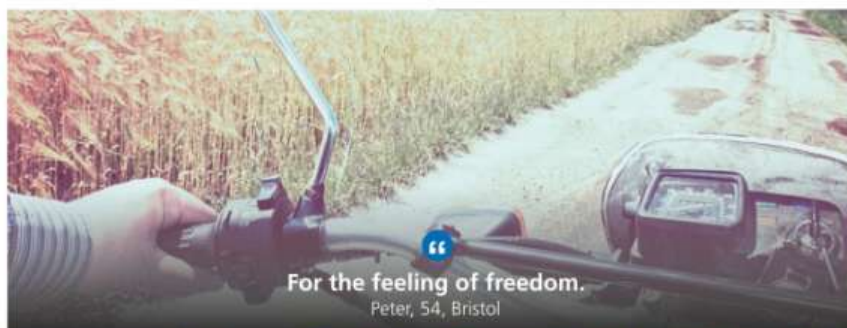
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Clubman's chic

Ride it to work in the week, then rasp it around a track at weekends. That was the theory behind Velo's Venom and it still holds true for classic racers today

PHOTOS BY MIKE POWELL

■ **Above:** There's no mistaking a Velocette. If it's built after 1950 and has a silencer like this, then it's a Velo

■ **1:** The Avon fairing was a popular fitting among fast Velofellows in the distant wayback and suits the bike's slender build

■ **2:** Knee grips and a tyre inflator. We're unsure about using cap-head screws to hold on the grips, but the inflator surely serves a purpose

■ **3:** One cramped cockpit. The tight screen surrounds both clocks (the grey-face tachometer is a later addition), with the large Miller ammeter and switching obviously different from more commonplace Lucas fare. Ace bars are comfy for some

BROUGHS AND VINCENTS are top of the list of desirable classic bikes, even if their prices tend to make them unobtainable for most. Much more attainable and probably just as desirable, Velocette's sporting models must head the second division of British bikes and are much lusted after, with what seems to be a never-ending passion for ownership among the cognoscenti.

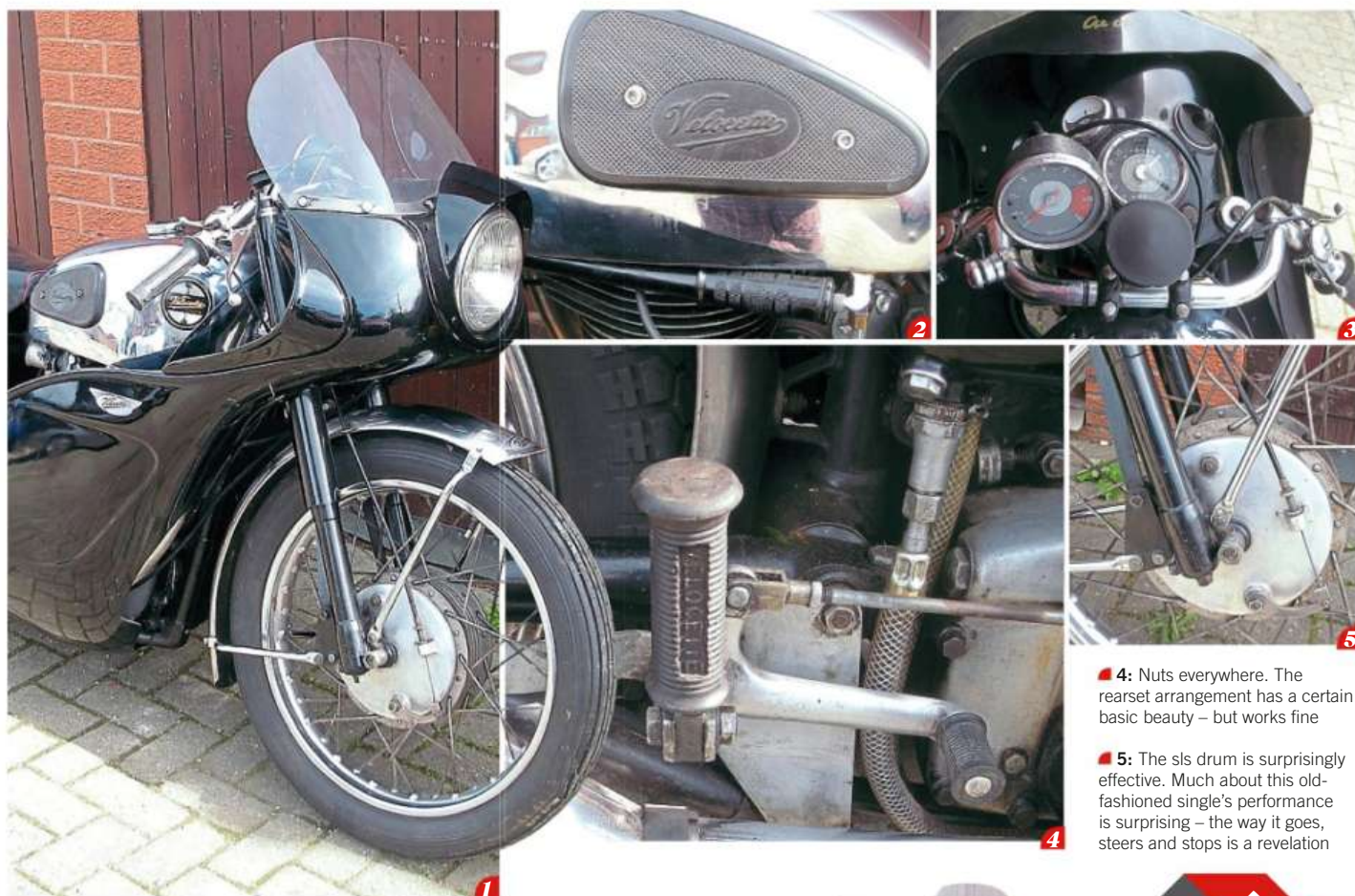
No cammy Norton, BSA Goldie or any other contemporary Superbike ever achieved 100mph for 24 hours as the Velo Venom pushrod single did. That 1961 Montlhéry record still resonates, even in this day of 200mph TT laps, giving the name Venom a well-deserved reputation.

Although Veloce had been winning races with high-performance single-cylinder machines for decades, the postwar customer roadburners didn't really arrive until the latter part of the 1950s, in the shape of the 500cc Venom and the 350cc Viper. Before these feisty beasts appeared the Velocette was considered an accomplished, high-quality touring

machine that suited the sporting rider. Then, in 1961, that Montlhéry record grabbed the headlines and the sophisticated sporting single had definitely arrived...

The Venom, Clubman and Thruxton versions of the 499cc engine can be provoked into producing 40bhp and more, from wildly varying specifications tailored over the decades to each owner's aspirations. These usually include a high comp piston, a Nimonic exhaust valve, monster Amal TT or GP carb (with accompanying cut-away in the petrol tank), close-ratio gearbox with mountainous first gear, reinforced engine plates, 21s front brake, TT magneto, alloy wheels, twin clocks, raucous exhaust, two-way damped forks, and the inevitable cramped racing crouch from clip-ons and rearsets (with short brake pedal to match). Good luck with finding a 'standard' one.

Thruxtons, in particular, look magnificent and, if you can cope with the single-purpose nature of the beast, they more than live up to expectations at full tilt. A 36bhp Venom will top the ton and can hit 30mph before you've fully engaged the clutch. The 45bhp



4: Nuts everywhere. The rearset arrangement has a certain basic beauty – but works fine

5: The s/s drum is surprisingly effective. Much about this old-fashioned single's performance is surprising – the way it goes, steers and stops is a revelation

Thruxton, with its 10:1 compression piston, hairpin valve springs, gas-flowed head, big valves, downdraft intake and Dunlop alloy wheels, was still winning TTs in 1967 and stayed in production until 1970.

There's plenty of expertise available from the trade and owners' club, but be certain to investigate each machine's provenance carefully. Velocette built around 1100 Thruxtons all told, but many enthusiasts have since created their own... Oh, and don't imagine that every Velocette was necessarily black – early Venoms were finished in Dove Grey. All have a distinct and extremely individual character.

'Character' is indeed the word for this particular Venom. Something of a time machine, the bike was purchased by Mike P a decade or so ago at a Bonhams' auction. The Velo has that unmistakable patina of age that restoration can only destroy. Fortunately, after the attentions of only two previous owners during its 55 years of existence, the Venom has retained most of the desirable period extras fitted around the time it left Hall Green in 1960. The full Avon fairing, Smiths' tachometer, John Tickle rearsets, ace bars and other details are still fitted, giving the machine that unmistakable period café racer look. Although the original TT carb was substituted in favour of a Monobloc for tractability on the road, the Thruxton-type seat has been replaced by a newer one only because the original was somewhat tatty. Indeed, when Mike found it the whole bike looked a bit sorry for itself, having been unused for a long period, but under the grime lurked the hoped-for jewel.

At home on the bench, no sparks were evident.

PRICE GUIDE

£7500 to £15,000

Depending on specification and provenance

FAULTS & FOIBLES

Demands dedication from its owner. Sky-high first gear makes kick-starting and pulling away a challenge. Don't hold the clutch in at lights; extended application will overheat and then warp the plates. Check for stripped threads in crankcase. Vibes should not be a problem (it's normally a very smooth motor) so bracket/stay fractures suggest misaligned flywheels. Timing gears should likewise run quietly

ALSO CONSIDER

Norton Inter (well, if you're going this far why not add an overhead cam to the mix?). BSA Gold Star (bright, brash and rapid, but not quite so refined). Vincent Comet (not a racer, but as much prestige and a lot more comfort)

SPECIALIST

Grove Classics

OWNERS' CLUB

velocetteowners.com



BUY IT NOW

This very Venom is now ready to go to a new home. So, if you have £9950 burning a hole in your pocket and you'd like to experience the thrills of a clubman's spec machine, contact Mike on 01743 891889/07887 917446

So Mike engaged in a titanic struggle to remove the magneto, caused by the retaining nut, which hides in a blind space between the barrel and magneto body. "If anybody has solved this problem without stripping the engine please let me know!" Eventually, he separated the mag from the motorcycle and it was despatched to FTW of Sheffield for a rebuild. Sparks restored, the fuel tank, having had the swilling-out treatment beloved of restorers everywhere, was sealed with Wylde's Flowliner, primed with super juice and "after only three or four hours of kicking" the single-cylinder engine burred back into life after who knows how many years aslumber.

The engine seemed to have covered a mere 10000 miles from new and the previous owner confirmed that



▲ **Above:** Despite its sporting intent, the Venom boasts both centre and side stands, and even sidecar lugs. These are not often found on current sports bikes

QUALITY & FINISH Velocette

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Motorcycling's Bruce Main-Smith at 108mph.

MANUFACTURED: 1956 to 1970 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled ohv high-cam single **BORE / STROKE:** 86mm x 86mm **CAPACITY:** 499cc **COMPRESSION:** 8:1 (standard) **POWER:** 36bhp@5700rpm **LUBRICATION:** Dry sump, gear pump **IGNITION:** Miller magneto (BT-H racing optional) **CARBURETTOR:** Monobloc (TT optional) **TRANSMISSION:** Chain **GEARBOX:** Four-speed, foot change **FRAME:** Brazed lug chrome-moly tube, single downtube, cradle **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Veloce tele forks, hydraulic damping **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm, twin Woodhead Monroe shocks **FRONT BRAKE:** 7.5in sls drum, full-width alloy hub **REAR BRAKE:** 7in sls drum, full-width alloy hub **TYRES:** 3.25 x 19 **WHEELBASE:** 54in **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 6in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31in **DRY WEIGHT:** 375lb **TOP SPEED:** 102mph

mileage. It had been rebuilt in the mid-1980s with an Omega piston, barrel, conrod and big end, and the transmission and electrics were overhauled at the same time. Thereafter, the Venom had covered just a thousand miles under its own steam. Last on the road in 2013, Mike woke the Velo from hibernation for this summer season – and once again a lack of sparks became evident, so he girded his loins (and knuckles) to remove the magneto once more...

This Velo, indeed any Velo, is an acquired taste and Mike confirms that, “the starting procedure does take practice. It’s not so different from starting any big single of the day, but it does require adherence to the book, as does the setting up of the somewhat idiosyncratic clutch mechanism. Once mastered, these techniques make ownership much more pleasant.”

The cachet associated with one of the premium marques doesn’t go amiss, either. “Velo riders also enjoy one of the best owners’ clubs; spares and specialist services are available from a number of well-established outlets and your bike will be admired wherever you go on it.”

Record holders, TT winners and other race-bred bikes are not the easiest of machines to live with. So, if you want a good mannered, softly tuned, handsome bike to bumble around the lanes on, then you’re better off with the much more comfortable MSS model. Even Mike, the Venom owner, reckons the MSS is “probably the best Velocette ever in the eyes of some, me included.” If, however, you can’t quite stretch to a Thruxton but like the lean and racy look of the clubman Velocettes, then you can’t go far wrong with a Venom like this one – especially if you want to chance your arm at historic or classic racing. **CBC**

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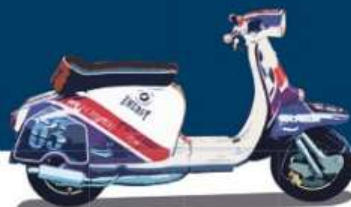
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High falutin'

Soft choppers are far from popular, so this Hi-Rider has been totally transformed

PHOTOS BY WACCY

■ **Above:** This entertaining example of Norton's Commando started life as a Hi-Rider, perhaps the original soft chopper

■ **1:** Speedo. Pieces of metal. Can there be a connection?

■ **2:** The man has a lathe, and knows how to drive it. This much is clear

■ **3:** Bend some sheet to produce a mount for the two clocks. They look well

■ **4:** Build them all together. Custom!

■ **5:** All traces of the soft chop have now gone, replaced by hard lines and soft curves

"MAYBE NORTON HAD one of those machines from the classic film, 'The Fly,'" says Phil at Waccy. We suspect he's being serious. "I believe it was called a disintegrator-integrator. Somehow a Fantic chopper got into the chamber with a Commando and produced a hideous mutant..." Phil is, of course, being rude about Norton's first foray into the world of the factory custom, or as he puts it: "The factory's monument to bad taste, the Hi-Rider."

Actually, another film is more likely to be to blame – 'Easy Rider.' It certainly inspired Harley's Super Glide, which came out in 1971, the same year as the first Commando Hi-Rider. Norton converted its 750 sports roadster into an urban cowboy by simply adding cowhorn handlebars (or 'apehangers', if you prefer), a peanut petrol tank that held just 2.5 gallons (hence the 'urban' reference: the Hi-Rider didn't hold enough fuel to roam freely on America's wide-open interstates), chrome sissybar, a semi-solo banana seat and a minuscule headlamp. Rumour has

it that the resulting Hi-Rider failed to take the North American continent by storm with only 50 or so sales in its original guise. In 1973 it became an 850 (OK, like the other Commandos it was 828cc really), and by its final year of 1975 the Hi-Rider had gained an electric start and its foot controls had swapped sides.

It was never offered to the UK or European markets and sales in the States were reportedly low. Yet a steady trickle of Hi-Riders return to Britain these days, suggesting that someone must've bought or stored the things back in the 1970s. When Waccy recently imported a pre-electric start Hi-Rider in various boxes from the USA, it took them less than a millisecond to dismiss the thought of building it back to standard spec.

"It might be one of the most rare Commando models," says Phil, "but even the most entrenched Norton purist couldn't object if you didn't want to restore it back to original."

The Waccy team are café racer fans, with



experience of running café race Commandos in their youth. One of the team built and ran just such a bike in the late 1970s against the trends of the time, when most of his peers were building chops. So a plan developed to build something 'classy and usable', without changing the classic Commando frame and so retain the rear frame loop. The isolastic cradle was carefully examined for damage and wear. The rubber mountings, which had deteriorated over time, were replaced. The frame was tidied up by removing any unwanted brackets and it was checked for damage and overall straightness.

The team turned their attention to the engine, which was stripped and the components carefully measured. "We have the equipment to measure extremely accurately," says Phil, "to half a 10th of a thou, for instance, on a bore. This means that we can check the quality of any work we out-source, like as crankshaft regrounding. We've found Pete Lovell to be consistently excellent in this regard."

However, the Hi-Rider motor contained a pleasant surprise. "Most engines and gearboxes seem to suffer more from internal corrosion because of poor storage, rather than being worn out through use. We were lucky with this one – most internals were in fine condition. Maybe the original bike was kept indoors, to avoid offending good taste!"

The Commando's original Roadholder forks were retained and fitted with new bushes and seals. The bike needed new wheel rims, so Phil decided to source these from somewhat further afield than the UK. "We chose the rim sizes to get the best tyre

PRICE GUIDE

£4500 to £8500
(Standard Commando)

FAULTS & FOIBLES

Everything needed to repair and improve a Commando is readily available. That's the good news. Less good news is that some of the original bikes you'll find offered at high prices can be very worn out and expensive to fix, so buying one that has already had the treatment can be a good idea, though the initial purchase price will always be high. Commandos are as packed with charisma as they are with torque, original brakes aren't great and the handling can be a teeny bit unstable, but it's all fixable.

ALSO CONSIDER

BMW R90S, Royal Enfield Interceptor Mk2, Harley Sportster or Moto Guzzi Le Mans – all offer similar chunky grunt and charisma

SPECIALISTS

Norvil: norvilmotorcycle.co.uk
RGM: RGMNorton.co.uk

OWNERS' CLUB

NOC:
nortonownersclub.org



BUILD IT NOW

This particular project is probably long gone to a new owner, but Wacey has three other Commando builds on the go, including the 1970 Long Range model seen here. It came from a barn in Essex, has only 5000 miles on its clock and is going through a total nut and bolt restoration. See wacey.co.uk/01974_821555

choice and handling. So these are Sun aluminium rims that originate from Buchanans Spoke and Rim Inc in California. The hubs were vapour blasted and fitted with new bearings before lacing to the rims."

The instrument mountings were originally going to be flat plate but this "looked unfinished and placed the instruments too high." The obvious answer was to use standard Commando clock pods, but there was a useful piece of 5083 aluminium waiting in the workshop and "so started one of those jobs which took up too many hours..." It took considerable careful machining to fabricate a bespoke pair of pods, but after many hours "we were very pleased with the end result: they look like they belong there."

A new saddle was next on the list, but it didn't



6: At the heart of it all – the mighty meat of Norton's biggest twin

7: Getting right down to it was never easier than on this 'lowboy' Commando

8: Rearsets, of course, and it's a good job the rest folds on this side if the kickstart is ever to work. Tidy use of rose joints in the linkage, too



live up to expectations. "It was an off-the-shelf seat that didn't fit properly or suit the lines of the bike," so it was adapted to a suitable shape and was then covered by Mototrim. Phil reckons "the petrol tank is the crowning glory of a motorcycle build", so he had a bespoke item made by Tab2 Classics. "The blend of aluminium's light weight with strength really compliments the Commando." New carbs were fitted, enhanced by mesh-covered velocity stacks. Rocker oil lines were made in-house using braided hose and anodised aluminium fittings from Torques UK in Abergavenny; the brake lines are similar but use stainless fittings.

As you'll see from the photos, everything has been painted, polished, coated or chromed, but what you can't see is the all-new electrical system with Pazon ignition and the dozens of other new components that have been incorporated into the build.

Perhaps the most demanding part of the project was ensuring the correct clearances on the isolastic rubber mountings that keep the rider insulated from the big twin's vibes. "Too loose and handling can be adversely affected," says Phil. "Too tight and the ensuing vibration can damage components, including the frame itself. The light weight of a Commando frame is instantly apparent when you pick one up. This was highlighted to us when we hung one up to paint, after doing the same with a 750 Laverda frame of similar vintage.

"Take the time to get it right, though, and the Commando is a joy to ride. It has much less apparent vibration than most parallel twins of the day, added to good handling and a torque-laden motor. Of course, the technicalities of a build only come together when you finally ride the machine.

"A summer evening and a well set-up Commando takes some beating. Find yourself some roller-coaster hills, the ones with a chill in the dip and warmth at the top. Then revel in the way it pulls up the inclines on a wave of torque, and you can lose yourself in the burble on the over-run..." Sounds like Phil has built a bike he really appreciates.

"There are few machines that engage you in the moment like a good Commando. It has that singularly fine blend of character and practicality that isn't always present in every classic. Discovering it – that's what really makes the effort in these builds worthwhile."

MANUFACTURED: 1971 to 75 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled four-stroke ohv parallel twin
BORE / STROKE: 77x89mm **CAPACITY:** 828cc **COMPRESSION:** 8.5:1 **POWER:** 58bhp@ 6000rpm **CARBURETION:** 2x 32mm Amal Concentric **IGNITION:** Lucas alternator **PRIMARY DRIVE:** Triplex chain **CLUTCH:** Single plate, diaphragm type **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Roadholder tele forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm, twin shocks **FRONT BRAKE:** 272mm single disc **REAR BRAKE:** 7in drum **TYRES:** 4.10x19, Dunlop TT100 **WEIGHT:** 430lb dry **WHEELBASE:** 58.6in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 32in **FUEL ECONOMY:** 55mpg average **ACCELERATION:** Standing quarter mile in 13.06s **BRAKING:** 29ft from 30mph **TOP SPEED:** 122mph All data for standard 850 Commando



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Combat steady

BSA's sidevalve soldier is no top gun, but it served its dues during the Second World War

WORDS BY FRANK MELLING / PHOTOS BY CAROL MELLING

■ **Above:** We know this BSA isn't a technically perfect example of a British M20 dispatch rider's bike. As military enthusiasts typically delight in supremely accurate detail, please accept that this M20 is in the spirit of a dispatch bike rather than being an award-winning specimen

■ **1:** While the girder forks and rigid rear end did not exactly provide a magic carpet ride, they didn't break either. During skirmishes, roadside repairs on sophisticated frames or forks would not be high on a DR's must-do list

■ **2:** A bike that really does appear to be doing 10mph while standing still. The finish is cheap and there's grease from the forks everywhere – hopefully including where it's supposed to be

■ **3:** A Lucas magdyno took care of both HT and LT electrical demands. This unit's carrying a later 'long' dynamo atop the magneto, so there may even be lights

BSA'S M20 WAS the most widely built military motorcycle of the Second World War, with more than 126,000 units produced. Despite these huge numbers, it was not the most popular motorcycle with the troops who rode it into battle. Almost every BSA rider would have dumped their M20 in a ditch at the first opportunity in order to have the vastly superior Matchless G3L. Given the fact there were better motorcycles available, what made the M20 such a success?

Its origins go back to 1936 and Britain's greatest-ever motorcycle designer, Val Page. I am a huge fan of Valentine Page and the M20 either shows that he was having a bad day at the drawing office or, more likely, BSA management had really put the knuckle screws on him in terms of cost-cutting.

The aim was to produce a dull as ditchwater, 500cc sidevalve single with a lot of torque. The job of this unworthy steed would be to plod around pulling a sidecar that would contain mum, three kids and the family dog. BSA claimed only 13bhp for its new 500, so obviously this was not intended to be a hot sports set-up.

When the bike was first submitted to the War Dept

in 1937 it was rejected, with both the piston and cylinder barrel failing after 6000 miles. The second batch of prototypes was better, just scraping through the 10000-mile minimum target and a small batch of M20s was ordered in 1937. There was a tremendous irony in the order. The M20 was heavily criticised by the Mechanisation Experimental Establishment for being slow, heavy and possessing an extremely low ground clearance. This should have been its death knell, but the MEE test staff did like the bike's reliability and ease of maintenance. They were also rather fond of the M20's huge pulling power.

Meanwhile, the off-road experts at BSA were just as unhappy at the thought of the M20 in military service. While the management was pushing the British government to order the M20, BSA's highly influential development rider, Bert Perrigo, was vociferously against the idea. Perrigo proposed the ohv Blue Star instead. It was lighter, faster and vastly better off-road than the M20. Army trials riders had the even better M24 Gold Star, which they had used to success in international long-distance events. As there were so many better alternatives, why the M20?

One critical reason was the materials and



engineering used in the M20. It was low tech, easy to manufacture and most importantly contained very little aluminium. This was vital when British housewives were being urged to donate their pots and pans to make Spitfires – the shortage was that severe. A motorcycle with a cast-iron barrel, cylinder head and brake hubs was always going to be desirable.

The engine was basic beyond belief and was simple to manufacture. No special machine tools were required and assembly was equally straightforward. Again, this was critical when skilled craftsmen were being drafted into the military and new staff had to learn skills very quickly. Because there was nothing new on the bike, sub-contractors were not placed on unfamiliar and challenging ground. The girder forks were simple to make, not being subject to the demands of very fine tolerances, and brazed lug frames had been made by BSA since the start of motorcycle production. If anything broke it could be repaired simply in field workshops by competent military mechanics who did not need to be experts in motorcycles.

BSA was able to make lots of M20s very quickly – and under severe strain. In 1939, BSA controlled 67 factories, employed 28,000 people and used more than 25,000 machine tools. So when the main factory at Small Heath was bombed during the blitz, production was not terminally damaged. BSA's capacity to manufacture the M20 in such large quantities was the one thing that prevented British and Commonwealth forces being equipped with a better military motorcycle. The logistics officers wanted a small inventory of spares that could be sent anywhere in the certainty that they would be supplying M20s.

The statistics are quite startling. All the British

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4: The red filler cap was to dissuade stressed squaddies from filling the oil tank with petrol

5: Military evaluators appreciated the engine's enormously-low 4.9:1 compression ratio, heavy flywheels, long piston stroke and ultra-mild valve timing. The four-speed, wide-ratio gearbox was also well-received. First was perfect for plodding through mud, while top gear still allowed the DR to make brisk progress



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Comet Classics are offering this 1940 M20 for £5999. It's a local bike, only four recorded owners, which spent much of its life pulling a sidecar and has been largely unrestored. Comes with some history and its old logbook

factories combined produced 289,666 motorcycles and of this total 126,334 were M20s. For sure, wherever British troops were engaged in war there were lots of M20s present.

The final item in its favour was the M20's ease of use. Most of the British population was unfamiliar with anything mechanical in 1939. Many working class people had never even been in a car, let alone driven one. The M20 was low, slow and almost impossible to stall, and therefore ideal for the sort of mass-induction programmes that transformed thousands of new recruits into competent motorcyclists in a very short time.

Not that the M20 was without its faults. The clutch was crude and unreliable and had to be kept free of oil to work effectively. Some DRs complained bitterly that the clutch on their brand-new M20s dragged and slipped and had to be rebuilt even before entering service. In fact, the DonRs, as they were known, became notorious for customising their regular rides. Ten cigarettes slipped to one of the REME (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineer) fitters would ensure that you got a good magneto or a sweet gearbox and particular bikes became much loved by their riders.

This affection was well-placed. Once you had got



Above: The sturdy steed of many a DonR, carrying spare parts, junior officers and vital documents. That latter task was very important when field radios were still heavy, clumsy and unreliable

over the problem of an M20 spitting back through the carburettor and setting fire to the bike – this was so common that later military M20s actually carried a fire extinguisher – the BSA would amble along at 45mph without complaint. It consumed around one gallon of anything vaguely combustible every 50 miles. With more than three gallons of fuel in the tank, the M20 had a good range.

The Lucas magdyno ignition system was also a blessing. The dynamo charged the battery and provided only a hint of lighting, but all vehicles operated on highly constrained 'blackout' illumination anyway. The magneto element of the magdyno was completely independent of the dynamo and provided a reliable spark to keep the motor running. Roadside

maintenance was simple and the width of the points gap in the magneto could (genuinely) be set with a piece of cigarette paper.

Often, M20s were loaded to ridiculous extents and the bike's low ground clearance was moot. Whether carrying ammunition, spares or weapons, the M20 rider needed to be able to instantly place both feet on the ground. Once more, basic engineering was good in battle conditions. When the bike got stuck it was easy to drag out – on its side or upside down – and then it started instantly. Just as importantly, the docile power and huge flywheels meant that M20s would haul themselves out of trouble with the minimum of fuss. In urgent situations a highly stressed M20 could even be persuaded to run up to 60mph (but not for long).

This brings us to the 21st century. There were so many M20s made that tens of thousands of them became available postwar. The last ones were sold off by Pride & Clarke during my teenage years, brand-new and ready to roll for £29.19s.6d. These days, M20s fall into two separate categories. If you want a real, fully equipped, accurate in every detail, military bike for use in re-enactments then M20s don't come cheap. However, since you will have already spent a fortune on authentic memorabilia, you can afford the £5000 a totally correct M20 will fetch. A less-original specimen will be much more affordable – either in quasi-military specification or as the much prettier civilian model.

There is nothing overtly wrong with an M20 in that it will start, run, stop and amble round corners satisfactorily, but these bikes are desperately dull, joyless things to ride. M20 enthusiasts will tell you of the bucolic pleasure of cruising country lanes with the chuff, chuff, chuff of the sidevalve engine puffing along beneath you. This is true, but there are so many much better experiences to be had. A Tiger 90, Ariel Red Hunter or an early Gold Star are so vastly better in every way that, other than its purchase price, I can't think of a single reason to ride an M20. **CHB**



MANUFACTURED: 1938 to 1955 **ENGINE:** Single-cylinder sidevalve **BORE / STROKE:** 82mm by 94mm **CAPACITY:** 496cc **COMPRESSION:** 4.9:1 **POWER:** 13bhp at 4200rpm **CARBURETION:** Amal 276 **BRAKES:** 7in sls drum **TYRES:** 3.25/3.50-19 **WHEELBASE:** 54in **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 5in **SADDLE HEIGHT:** 30in **DRY WEIGHT:** 370lb **TOP SPEED:** 64mph



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Desert sled

Originally made in Japan. Recently revitalised in the USA. Go get some air!

PHOTOS BY MATTHEW JONES

■ Above: From tiny acorns...

■ 1: Take the weight off... although if used in anger the seat would remain unused, mostly

■ 2: The CL engine has been taken out from 450 to 505cc and the exhaust is a little more free-flowing than the original performance to match the volume

JASON PAUL MICHAELS has got form. As one of the founders of Dime City Cycles in the USA, he's well known for taking a rolling wreck and transforming it into an ultra-cool street custom.

Even so, when he found a single-owner-from-new, 1973 Honda CL450 stored in a garage in Maine he had no intention of ripping it apart.

"It was in fantastic shape," says Jason. "It ran wonderfully. All we had to do was put fresh fuel in it. So, initially the intent wasn't to do anything other than restore and ride it." You can hear the 'but then' coming, can't you?

"But then I got hooked on desert sleds. I couldn't sleep. I was reading about them non-stop and seeing all my buddies on the west coast building these old Triumphs and BSAs, and doing events like Hell On Wheels.

"I hadn't seen a single Honda out there and started thinking it could be a real contender. It would be lighter and more reliable and could be a ton of fun

in the dirt. So then it started. A full-on desert sled project!"

Once committed to the plan, Jason didn't hang around. "We built the bike in two weeks," he says. "No exaggeration. We worked roughly six or eight hours a day and from tear-down to ride-out it took two weeks doing the majority of the work in-house – just getting help with machining and some bespoke parts."

In that time the humble Honda was completely reconfigured to withstand the worst it might encounter in rough-road competition riding, including a 505cc big-bore kit matched with Megacycle cams and a tweaked top end. "The biggest issue with these 450s is the torsion bar cam system – so long as you have a decent set of bars they run great. There are some traditional valve-spring conversion kits out there, but we decided not to go that route."

Other strategic upgrades to ensure durability and reliability were incorporated into the build. "We did



TIG weld and lap all the frame joints and reinforce it a bit. On any old bike the electrical system is the key system. We always build a new harness from scratch, make sure that we have a rectifier/regulator combo unit and convert from points to electronic ignition when possible."

Improved suspension could be make or break, literally. A set of Progressive rear shocks were easy enough at the back, but the front end needed more attention. Jason finally fitted a set of dohc CB750 forks, which are two inches longer than the 450 items. These were equipped with Progressive springs and bespoke preload adjusters to give more than two inches of extra travel and ground clearance.

"To our knowledge, no one has ever made preload adjusters for the dohc forks before, so we worked with machinist Jim Goodrich and he made them to our exact specifications. Jim helped out with machining some other parts, and Bowman Motorcycles did the handmade aluminium petrol

3: As well as being over-bored, the Honda's stock dohc system has been replaced with a pair of Megacycle cams, although the torsion bar valve springs have been retained

4: All good, clean fun. Getting dirty always is!

5: The original shocks have been replaced with a set of Progressive units. Highly rated by all who use them and a good idea here



This particular bike isn't for sale but Jason would be delighted to build another to your spec and worldwide delivery can be arranged. Contact jason@jasonpaulmichaels.com



Above: Although billed as a desert sled, the Honda looks rather like a completely competent backwoodsman

tank from our mould.” Squint at the pictures and you’ll see dozens of other bespoke components, unique to this machine, such as the exhaust, footrests and pedals, but Jason reckons the hardest thing to get right was an OE item.

“The most challenging part of the whole build was finding an authentic vintage Honda CL450 ribbed timing cover. My good friend (and accomplished

AHRMA racer) Scott Turner surprised me with one. It’s parts like that that you just can’t make that really put the finishing touches on the build.”

The Desert Sled certainly looks the part. So wot’ll it do, mister? “It’s visceral. The sound and feeling of the 505 twin under you when you’re wrapping the throttle, getting air, doing wheelies... it’s like nothing else. Everything seems more fun and enjoyable on a vintage bike in my opinion. On a vintage café racer, doing 100mph is like doing 150-plus on a modern bike. On a vintage dirt bike, getting small amounts of air and charging corners and dirt obstacles seems so much more exciting than on a modern dirtbike.

“It can pull a wheelie with virtually zero effort and it rips through berms like there’s no tomorrow. We took it to a motocross practice track to shoot these photos. I rolled it out of the truck, cranked it up and all these young kids on CRFs and YZs were looking at me thinking what the hell is this tattoo-covered fool going to do? Before too long they were cheering me on and asking about it. The Honda is super-light, nimble and has tons of power thanks to all the engine work.

“It’s been running strong since the day we put it together. The only issue we had to deal with was letting it sit for a while, and the carbs had to be cleaned because of the high levels of ethanol in the fuel over here.”

So, is there anything about the Sled that Jason would do differently if he started from scratch again?

“Nope, the bike is pretty much perfect in my opinion. And I’d love to do one again, just waiting on another customer...” That’s a hint, people. But if you just want to take inspiration from Jason’s efforts and build your own Desert Sled, his advice is to go for it and not get too wrapped up in the details. “Have fun and don’t worry about what it comes out like. So long as it runs and puts a smile on your face, who cares?” **CBC**



DONOR BIKE: 1973 Honda CL450 **ENGINE:** 505cc, Megacycle cams, port-matched intakes, back-cut transmission gears, full engine rebuild **BODYWORK:** Bespoke handmade aluminium, handmade Bates-style replica seat **CHASSIS:** Modified stock with HEIM joint stays for braking system and ability to accept eye-to-eye shocks **ELECTRICS:** New custom harness, Kim Boyle rear taillight, Antigravity lithium-ion battery, Dyna coils, Ricks Motorsport Electric stator, regulator rectifier, standard key style ignition, 2.5in mini electronic tach, Bates-style 5in headlight mounted on fork yoke

CONTROLS: Modified Biltwell one-inch moto-X bars with machined tapered inserts to accept all 7/8in controls (but still benefit from 1in base bars and risers). Tomaselli replica controls with Motion Pro cables. Oury grips and bar-ends, bespoke moto-X style footrests, mounts and shifter **EXHAUST:** Handmade stainless (raw steel provided by Cone Engineering) with custom inboard baffles and DEI header wrap **TYRES:** Excel shouldered aluminium, Continental KTC80s **BRAKES:** Standard CL drum brakes, EBC sintered shoes **SUSPENSION:** 15.5in Progressive 970 rear shocks, CB750 dohc front forks, Progressive springs, bespoke preload adjusters

THANKS TO: Jim Goodrich, Frankie Bowman, Biltwell, Progressive Suspension, Continental Tire, DEI Electronic, Dyna, Ricks Electric, Buchanan’s Wheel and Spoke, Cone Engineering, K&N



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Harley Husky horror



I AWAIT DELIVERY of CBG more than any other publication. This coverage of the Bike Shed show was fine ... other than that Harley-Husqvarn a Monstrosity. Good Lord! Have these modern so-called kustom builders no sense of what just doesn't go together to make a motorcycle?

I'd wager the 'King of Kool' would roll over in his grave if he saw his racing number on this beast. I have ridden amateur and vintage motocross in the US for 38 seasons with 15 of the last years on a 1974 Husqvarna in AHRMA. I don't think I could find a Husky rider here who would not be taken aback by seeing the famed Husqvarna gunsight logo with 'H-D' in it.

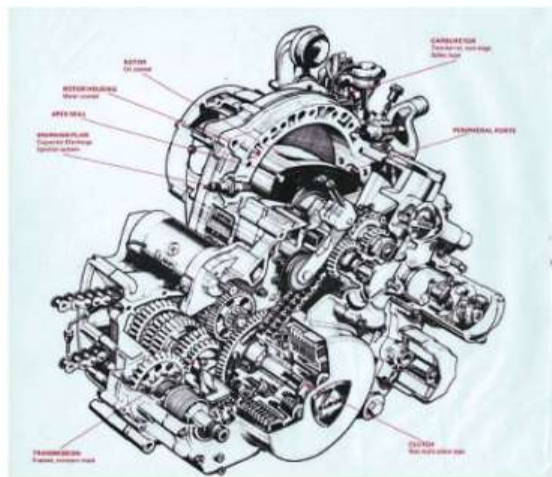
Blaine Stone

Rotary revolutions

STEVE COOPER'S EVALUATION of the Wankel engine and Suzuki RE5 in particular was both informative and enjoyable to read. It also made me think. I like that in a magazine and what I thought about was this: if the Wankel engine is so much more efficient than its reciprocal counterpart: why the 'high amount of heat dumped out of the exhaust' and atrocious fuel consumption? These are not signs of efficiency, quite the reverse in fact.

Heat exhausted without doing work is a clue to the high fuel consumption. Granted, the Wankel design improves mechanical efficiency through its rotary motion and elimination of the valve train. In that sense its ported inlet and exhaust makes it more of an improved two-stroke. Along with that go the poor combustion efficiency and lubrication issues. The inevitable conclusion is that Wankel traded improved mechanical efficiency, gaining quiet, smooth running, for a significant drop in thermodynamic efficiency thereby losing on the roundabouts.

As Steve says, hindsight is a wonderful thing, and in this case it is now clear that licensing the idea was much easier and more profitable than actually producing it. That said, I owned a fuel injected, 13B Mazda RX7 for some time and it was a delight to drive. Similarly, hopping off



Rotary motion; simplicity itself

my Triumph twin for a brief excursion on a well-sorted rotary Norton showed just how well the Wankel's vibration-free, smooth power delivery suits a motorcycle. What a shame then, that in the end, the lack of free lunches in the uncompromising land of physics could not be overcome by even the most well-funded and innovative of automotive engineers.

Martin Peacock

Old Skool

I BOUGHT A sad-looking 2001 Royal Enfield 500 Classic a couple of years ago, with intentions of doing it up as standard. But then when I searched for information about 'Indian Royal Enfields' I came upon the Enfield Indians, something



entirely different. They were Royal Enfields sold in the 1950s in America but badged as Indian motorcycles.

I was hooked, so over 18 months I have replaced the complete exhaust system to include a fishtail silencer and an alloy finned cooling ring; put on a deeper front mudguard from a 350, with studded mudflaps with reflectors; replaced the original speedo with a replica Smiths one; moved the ignition switch to a side box and fitted a replica 1950s light switch, front light bar and side lights. The high, wide handlebars came from an Enfield Thunderbird, then I added replica old style switches, levers,

chrome throttle and white grips. I fitted the Indian head mascot to the front mudguard, an unsprung single saddle which was re-covered, studded and tasselled. The bike also has a classic chrome rear light, studded and tasselled saddlebags, Indian-style horn cover and kickstart pedal.

It's been completely re-sprayed in Renault Etruscan red and Audi brilliant black paintwork, then masked off to hand-paint the pinstripes. I still have the wiring to complete, and to strip, clean and re-fit the rear wheel. Then it needs a service, and hopefully it'll fire up.

Kevin Walker

facebook

Readers' Rides

FIND US ON FACEBOOK and you'll see plenty of Classic of the Day photos – including snaps of readers' bikes which we're delighted to share for all to admire. This month, thanks to Rick for sharing this pic of his Moto Guzzi V-twin, taken back in the 1980s. "Bought this bike from the factory," says Rick. "Did the factory and museum tour and rode through four countries. However, it handled bad, stood up under brakes and weaved at high speed on the autobahns. I did enjoy it travelling around southern Europe and up the Stelvio Pass, but I came home to a 750 GT Ducati..."

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Street cred

I COULDN'T HELP but admire the Mash street tracker. Here's my 2003 Bonneville that I built five years ago. My friends and I have been doing up bikes up like this for 50 years. We used to call 'em street customs. Looks like the Von Dutch designers are about a half century behind the curve!

To me, the best looking street bikes have always been the late 1960s Triumph twins. At that time, no one in my circle of friends could afford to buy one, and we would make cosmetic

changes to any bike we were lucky to have in order to make ours look as much as possible like those Triumphs.

I have been spoiled by the comfort and reliability of the new generation Bonneville. However, I wanted my new Bonnie to look more like an old one, albeit a bit custom. I accomplished this by adapting a few aftermarket parts to fit and by fabricating a few other parts. The fenders are stainless replicas of the old Triumph's items, for which I made and adapted the brackets.

For the tank I chose a 1973 USA model in order to get that long, slender look. I also made a bracket to use the original bottom tank mount. I wrapped the (discoloured and corroded) headers, and adapted old-style Harley Sportster mufflers to them. The seat was made from scratch to give it a version of the old contoured seats from the 1950s Triumphs, as well as the custom slipper style popular in the 1970s in the US. I made the instrument panel and license plate



/ tail light bracket from heavy gauge aluminium and used a retro Lucas tail light as well as mini turn signals. To lower the seat height, I installed a 16 inch rear wheel and old-school enclosed

rear shocks that are 1¼ inches shorter than stock.

Overall, I think the illusion that the bike gives is pretty convincing. I am often asked 'What year is that?'

Owen Mathews



Triple tricks

THE FAULTS AND foibles about BSA and Triumph triples last month reminded me of my T160. It was supposedly a Cardinal that had come back from Saudi in a crate, unused, and had been put back into UK spec with a maroon and white tank. It had been to LP Williams en route to me, to have some mods done like fitting twin front discs, rearsets, Norman Hyde fork brace, Norton peashooter exhausts and a RITA electronic ignition. This bike went like excrement off of a garden implement, but burned oil at a great rate and smoked like an Ariel Leader.

I stripped the top end and ordered a set of Hepolite piston rings, deglazed the bores, fitted new valve seals, and rings, torqued the whole

thing up. Hey presto! No more smoking exhaust and huge oil consumption. The cost was minor to the cure, but it still drank fuel at the rate of a H1 Kwacker.

This photo was taken about 15 years ago. The Ace of Clubs was a hotel / restaurant in Lifton on the old A30. It had been there since before the war, and I am told that it was a haunt of local ton-up boys and girls in the 1960s and 70s. It became a Little Chef for many years, but the original sign survived under the Little Chef plastic tack – revealed when the new bypass opened. I thought it would make a good photo, and it did!

That T160 had been fitted with alloy rims and a 'datebox' air filter. On Avon tyres it was one of the best handling bikes I have ever owned.

Clive Drake

Winter draws on

I'VE SPENT HALF a lifetime riding my BSA A10 and other British bikes in all weathers, in the wild country of Ireland and Wales. I thought a few do's and don'ts from my personal experience for winter riding on a Britbike would be useful.

- Don't use crimp-on white metal wiring connectors because they are crap! WD40 all your switches once a month, especially if you're using an electronic ignition kit on your bike. If you have a splayed head with bellmouths on your carbs drain the float bowls every so often.
- Don't set off for a week at Christmas with a cracked slip ring in your mag. When you encounter snow on the road, which you probably will do in Wales, the bike will stop every couple of miles. When you're drying out said slip ring, with a finger covered in toilet roll stuck in the pick-up hole, don't kick the bike over too fast because you'll get a dart. One or two are fun, but after six or seven your arm goes numb. Then invariably you fall off!
- If you're riding on snow in Ireland, when you come into a town don't assume that the road is black because the snow is melted or the road salted. It is probably black ice and you'll probably fall off. Again!
- Generally, if you fall off in winter, sliding is less painful than rolling



or tumbling. Just try to keep as far away as possible from the bike as you both slide up the road. And don't slide into cars or walls as this hurts. You can usually steer yourself with your feet...

- If you lose half a piston on your A10 and remove the bits from the sump and decide to go on one cylinder, bear in mind you'll be using a pint of oil every 30 miles or so. That way you won't run out and throw a rod.
- If the road is flooded don't be afraid to use any railway tracks that happen to be alongside the road. Just look out for trains. My old T100 was the ideal bike for this caper as it was light. I also had to ride it through a forest to avoid another flood on the same trip through Wales, and got to pretend I was Steve McQueen for the day.

Finally, definitely DO go to Wales for winter riding. Magic scenery and roads, sound people, and guaranteed adventure if you don't belong to the AA.

Eddie Hogarth



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GEORGE COHEN

ROADSIDE REPAIR

*A remarkable encounter with the
Hose Doctor saves the day...*

I FIRST WENT to the Isle of Man for the 1979 TT races, to see Mike Hailwood put on his final show. I rode from Surrey to Liverpool on a 1939 Triumph Speed Twin with a group of mates on a motley collection; there was a Yamaha triple, a couple of Ducatis and an Ajay thumper. Everything was going along just fine, the Trumpet motoring along at a steady 65mph, and just as it was getting dark I noticed that my exhaust pipes were glowing a fabulous shade of orangey-red. Hmm, maybe a good time to pull over and check the bike. The problem was a partly broken magneto that was causing the timing to advance, then retard and so on. What I needed was a circular cap of about two inches in diameter to jam against the slip ring and the broken casing, but where was I going to find such an item? Up pops a hairspray canister with a lid of perfect dimensions from an equally perfect girl. Wow! A repair was completed and the journey to the Steam Packet was on again.

A few years later, and again on a ride up to Liverpool for the TT races, an even more remarkable roadside fix was carried out. I was riding my 1926 flat tank Norton and my travelling companions were also mostly Norton mounted, although a T110 Trumpet had managed to creep in. We were just a few miles south of the Bristol suspension bridge and I was following Dickeo Mileo de Racio on his 1932 TT senior Norton (the real deal) at a jolly good speed of about 80mph. No kidding. In those days we used to thrash our machines as if we were racing them, which of course we were. Every ride with Dickeo was a race, the first to the next petrol station, the first to the next pub, the first to arrive anywhere was seen as a victory.

The lead had changed a few times in the previous 50 miles, but at this point I was right up his exhaust pipe when I noticed that I was being splattered in hot Castrol 'R'. I could see that his bike was covered in the stuff and that at the next series of sweeping bends he was going down onto his ear. With my chin under the paint and the throttle screwed to full maximum, I just managed to get in front and frantically gesticulate for him to pull over. Into a large layby we came to a rest, shortly followed by the rest of the group. The rear

half of his cammy Norton, a machine very competent at spewing out copious quantities of oil from its cambox, was glistening purple; the oil return had split. Oh dear, this could be a tricky one to fix.

We all gathered around to examine the pathological defect in a tired old rubber hose and before any of us could come up with a solution, a miracle happened.

Into the layby sped a van with 'HOSE DOCTOR' written on the side. Unbelievable! The driver jumped out and told us that he had been travelling in the opposite direction and had seen us pull in, and being an 'old bike nut'

(his words) had wanted to come and have a look. What luck! We explained the problem and immediately it was no longer a problem. In the back of his van were hundreds of rubber hoses and BSP fittings (British Standard Pipe, for those of you who are still learning), a vice, a hydraulic crimping machine and all the bells and whistles required to repair any machine or piece of equipment with oil pipes and junctions. Within 10 minutes a perfectly-made new item was installed into the Norton. The oil tank was given a full quart of 'R', the bike washed with petrol and dried with the help of this chap's on-board airline and away we went.

Two great roadside repairs, and over the years there have been many more. There have also been many roadside failures to repair. Holed pistons, broken con rods, cracked barrels and other maladies have been beyond the corrective surgeries of myself, travelling companions and good Samaritans in vans with all the proper tools. So what or who determines the outcome? When are journeys and adventures brought to a halt and when do they simply become more adventures? When is Lady Luck with you? Is it a mind thing? Is it beyond the powers of being an old motorcycle enthusiast? Is it related to the number of subscriptions you have to motorcycle magazines?

Nope, it is just chance, unless you have arranged a cunning plan. Tomorrow I am off to the Isle of Man (approximately my 60th visit) and I am 100% confident my old cammy Norton will make it to the docks in Liverpool. It's going in the back of my mate's van... **CBG**

"Holed pistons, broken con rods, cracked barrels and other maladies have been beyond the corrective surgeries of myself, travelling companions and good Samaritans in vans with all the proper tools"

WHO IS GEORGE COHEN?

Dr George Cohen, MBBS MSc MRCPsych BA Eng, holds surgery in The Somerset Shed and specialises in Norton singles. He's also a VMCC Norton Specialist, Bonhams Motoring Consultant, 'Doctor of Reason' and 'Soldier of Fortune'



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Bonhams

IN 1884, Samuel Clements (better known as Mark Twain) was offered a ride on a bicycle. Two-wheelers were literally in vogue, dealing a sledgehammer blow against restrictive Victorian corsetry, and threatening to liberate all of humanity from the drudgery of walking. Two-wheelers of various types had been around for decades, but the first commercially successful 'safety' bicycle, in the form we still use today, didn't appear until 1885, when John Kemp Starley introduced his 'Rover'. Therefore, Twain must have ridden a high-wheeler, or penny farthing, which as everyone knows is an awkward and spectacularly dangerous contraption, only ridden today by eccentric English retronauts, or naked hippies at Burning Man.

Only one high-wheeler was built with an engine, when showman Lucius Copeland, who had been inspired by the Father of Motorcycling, Sylvester H Roper (all kneel), attached a small steam engine to a farthing-penny, with the big wheel in back.

The beast was cobbled up the same year as Twain rode his bicycle, but proper motorcycle production didn't begin for another few months, when Hildebrand & Wolfmüller began 'mass' production of their unusual motorrad. At any rate, Twain quite enjoyed his bicycle ride, and quipped "Get a bicycle! You will not regret it, if you live."

Twain's tagline is typically epic, full of the mixed joy and dread that's attached to motorised bicycles in the eyes of the public – pleasure and danger commingled. Perhaps we should steal it for motorcycling, regardless of scowls from the industry; "Get a motorcycle! You will not regret it, if you live!" But you never know what's going to punch your ticket, and it's rarely the obvious thing, right?

Example 1: Mike Hailwood. My buddy Chris was hot-footing his Triumph down an unpaved California road in June, and got tangled up in a ditch; he kicked the bike straight, but knew he'd broken something, and it was a painful ride the further 50 miles to the next town. A next-day X-ray revealed he had a cracked pelvis, and kidney cancer. It was early days – it hadn't metastasised; he's riding with one kidney today, and isn't the only person I've known whose life was saved by a motorcycle crash.

We rarely get to know what does us in, unless it's a catastrophic event. I worked for 25 years handling fairly toxic materials, which I



AUL D'ORLEANS

THE DREADED D-WORD

One of motorcycling's top topics best avoided. Or is it?

employed to make the homes of the very rich a little more beautiful. I breathed a lot of powdered cadmium, cobalt, and lead, and fumes of toluene and paint thinner, among other nasty stuff. I haven't heard the knock on the door from the hooded dude with a scythe... will he tell me which one of these things finally did the trick? I'm dying to know. Just kidding. I doubt the Man in Black (no, not Johnny Cash) reveals the litany of sins that conspired to my doom, and I couldn't relay the information back to the land of the living even if he did. "See, it was the !" Nope.

Motorcycles can certainly provide a big, life-ending catastrophe, and I've known a few folks who went out on bikes, some of whom were very dear to me. Motorbikes can be fatal, it's true, but more specifically, it's usually cars that are fatal to motorcyclists, and rarely the exuberant use of a bike's power that ends the game. The not-funny thing is, it's exactly the folks warning us about

Death By Motorcycle who constitute the #1 moto-killing class; non-riding automobilists. They're effectively warning us against themselves, knowing in their heart of hearts that they'll kill us all to prove the point. So, to reduce motorcycle fatalities, at least educate drivers that something other than SUVs travel our roads. Or even better, force everyone to ride a scooter for a year in urban traffic – those who survive, drive.

And they will not regret it, if they live. And they will very likely live, especially with a bit of rider education, some modest safety equipment, and a smidge of luck. The vast percentage of us do. The more important part is they will not regret it. If Twain had got past his first wobbly/scary moments on a bicycle, he would surely have given higher praise to that miracle of physics which is two-wheeled travel. The feelings engendered by motorcycling more properly deserve a symphony than a quip... or poetry, or a good novel, and folks have tried. But it's like writing about sex, another notoriously difficult subject to capture, and also grown dangerous over the decades. And which, with a little education and protection, is perfectly safe. Let's not complain that life's great joys are mixed with danger, nor listen to those who warn us against living with danger. If you enjoy the heady pleasures of riding, you will not regret it. And you will have lived. **CBG**

"The not-funny thing is, it's exactly the folks warning us about Death By Motorcycle who constitute the #1 moto-killing class; non-riding automobilists..."

WHO IS PAUL D'ORLEANS?

Paul d'Orleans is a writer, artist, sartorialist and photographer. He's best known as The Vintagent for his long-running blog and judges concours such as the Quail and Villa d'Este, consults for Bonhams auctions, shoots digital and tintype photographs, and is curating an exhibit on café racers at the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum.



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I'M LUCKY ENOUGH to have lived in two different countries, and ridden motorcycles in many more, but despite my cosmopolitan pretensions, I never fail to be surprised, even amazed when I happen upon sights that confound my understanding of what it's all about.

Thus it was when I spent a few days in the rural deep south of France last month, specifically the rolling hill country just east of the Alps known as the Ardeche. Famous for its steeply canted vineyards, pine forests and probably very little else, it also proved to be fantastic riding territory. The main roads are surfaced to a standard that puts our own to shame, they're bestowed with gently curving swervy and perhaps best of all, they're very lightly trafficked. Their backroads, usually just as smooth and sympathetically cambered, are almost completely empty. And, of course, unlike the wretched summer we've had to endure here at home and unlike every outing of any duration I took this August, it never rains and the sun blazes down illuminating the scenery with an infectious glee.

So yes, the Ardeche is a wonderful place to ride and evidently a pretty good place to own a bike. Especially as it turned out, an old and somewhat rickety-rackety one. Sure, there were plenty of big, modern BMWs, KTMs, Harleys and even a smattering of Japanese tourers bearing German, French, Italian and even British numberplates as well as today's *de rigueur* metal luggage, crashbar trelliswork and couples in expensive riding suits with cameras on their €400 helmets, but you can see them anywhere. Far more interesting to me were the dog-eared old staggers that clearly lived there permanently. And I'm not just talking about the local citizenry. Although interestingly enough – perhaps – the lovely little market town near which we shared a pleasantly run-down chateau with six other middle-aged biker pals (plus two non-believers) had legions of what appeared to be unreconstituted old hippies.

Which might explain the beat-up Honda Africa Twin hand-painted in the red, yellow and green livery of the committed Rasta-fan... along with its tassel-skirted, hand-embroidered cloth seat. I first noticed it sitting outside one of the town's many bar/cafés and sure enough, the next day it hurtled past our holiday home piloted by a helmetless chap in dreadlocks and plaited beard with a beatific smile on his dial and a large fat cigarette hanging from his gob.

There were of course, a ton of ancient Mobylettes, Motobecanes, Peugeotts and even a few Velosolexes (Velosoli?) with their engines and fuel tanks placed almost preposterously adjacent over the front wheel. From my limited knowledge of such contraptions – I am, after all, a rough, tough biker – most of these appeared to hark back to the 1960s and 70s, their lines uniformly



MARK WILLIAMS FOREIGN AFFAIRS

*Travel broadens the mind, even
a mind addled by an aulde
byke addiction*

pretty in that Gauloises and Pernod kind of way that immediately distinguished them as Gallic. Most of them were also visually pretty weary, and were it not for the fact that their generally helmetless and geriatric riders rode 'em like they stole 'em (which for all I know, they had), I'd have said they were on their last legs mechanically, too.

But coming across an open-fronted workshop down a backstreet, I exchanged a few smiles, hand-gestures and grunts – my French is that good – with an elderly, overalled gent who was ministering to three or four such ancient scoots, and indeed a very early Vespa with its headlamp in its front mudguard, who was clearly kept busy keeping them buzzy.

But there were plenty of bigger bikes of similarly advanced years, too, though sadly not of French origin. What seem to be most favoured thereabouts were single-lunged four-strokes three or more decades old – Yamaha SR500s and 250s, Suzuki DR350 trailbikes and even a lone BSA Starfire with a bungee'd on Honda-something tank, home-made exhaust and quite the most oil-sullied engine I've ever seen... but then it was British. But given my current obsession with mongrel street-scramblers, the most interesting thing I saw was a Honda XR500 which has been quite expertly and indeed tastefully spiffed up with what might've been a CB200 tank, alloy competition side panels à la Cheney, damn great twin

headlamps wearing mesh stoneguards and of course the fender-less knobbly-shod wheels that one expects of such machines. This, too, I first spied sitting outside a bar and as I dragged the missus over to inspect it in detail, its owner shouted gaily at me from behind his beer and yet another exchange ensued involving much smiling, gesturing and grunts. (Why can't foreigners learn to speak English like everybody else?)

The next day I saw him tearing around the town square on this impressive-looking piece of work chased by another fellow on what looked at first glance like yet another SR500, but in fact when the pair of them stopped for the inevitable lunchtime beer, it turned out to be a much, much rarer Kawasaki single of early 80s provenance, a Z250 FS or C. And it too had been kept alive by dint of home-welded exhaust arrangements, amateur upholstery and the liberal application of matt black aerosol, all amounting to what the French might call 'shabby chic'.

Which made a change from the rarely ridden, restored-to-within-an-inch-of-their-lives classics, or expensively customised confections on a retro theme that we're used to here. And none the worse for that... But then they do say that travel broadens the mind, even a mind addled by an aulde byke addiction. **CBG**

"The Ardeche is a wonderful place to ride and a pretty good place to own a bike. Especially an old and somewhat rickety-rackety one..."

WHO IS MARK WILLIAMS?

Williams is a serial motorcycle magazine junkie, having published, launched and edited *Bike*, *Which Bike?* and *Motorcycle International* among others. Which means he's tested, ridden and even owned more bikes than is probably good for him

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HUB SPRINGS ETERNAL

...when it's the small things in life that really matter, Triumph will always oblige

WORDS AND PHOTOS: PHIL MATHER

Few people go to an autojumble to buy a complete bike. Old bits, interesting bits and the sort of stuff you used to get at your local bike shop when you had a local bike shop – that's what autojumbles are for.

Nevertheless, Simon Cooper went to Netley Marsh to seek out yet more clutch plates for his long suffering BSA M21 and came home with a sprung hub Triumph. Not quite a Speed Twin nor a Thunderbird, you understand, because a previous owner had mixed the two models up, fitting a 650 motor into what the

paperwork would have you believe was a 500 rolling chassis. That said, this was an autojumble purchase, although both Simon and the mate who shared the cost with him agreed, it simply oozed potential.

What they really needed now though, was a 500 motor.

Not long afterwards, on another weekend at another autojumble, the pair chanced upon another sprung hub machine. This time it was a Thunderbird with an all-alloy 500 motor. Obviously, here was the means to recreate both bikes as they had been originally



MAIN:

At first glance, we all smile and admire the originality, the patina, the... hang on, it's not exactly what it seems, is it? Not exactly

TOP:

The bike's a Triumph Speed Twin, of course. Well, so sayeth the paperwork, so it must be true. Look again at the engine. For a start it announces that it's a 650 on the timing cover, right there, and the top end is from a much younger animal

ABOVE:

Closer inspection reveals that the engine started out as a T110, and as we all know the T110 always had a swinging arm frame, and... Hang on, how modern is that top end?

and so a plan was hatched and a second joint purchase undertaken.

But as is often the case, the plan soon fell apart. The 500 motor was the better of the two and the mate didn't see the point in tearing apart what was essentially a good bike for the sake of a minor point of authenticity. And Simon already had a stack of 650 motor parts in his shed that would be invaluable if they were ever needed, which, given the state of the machine, they almost certainly would be. So the mate kept the 500 and Simon the 650. As compromises go, everything seemed to have worked out.

"The motor didn't run at all well, so I stripped it down almost immediately and started figuring out ways to make it reliable both as daily transport and for rallies up to Scotland and over to France."

With the best part of 35 years' experience working on old motorcycles, Simon can say that kind of thing with conviction. His father used to trundle the family – mum and four kids – around in a Busmar Astral sidecar hitched to a BSA M21. The Astral was a big sidecar by anybody's standards and according to Simon it would have been more appropriately named the Busmar Colossal.

"A bit like Thunderbird 2," I ventured, trying to imagine something that might have appealed to young imaginations on a day's outing.

"Not really," was the reply. "It was a lot shorter, a lot

fatter – and it wasn't painted green. Nice idea though. Dad fitted a sliding door and a bench seat along the inside to get us all in," Simon recalls. "I learnt a lot from him and I guess he sowed the seeds of my love for British bikes, even though my first machine, when I turned 16, was a brand new 50cc Suzuki X1."

Naturally, it didn't take him long to outgrow the Suzuki and as soon as he was legally eligible he traded up to a bigger bike – a Dnieper 650 twin with sidecar. "I would have liked a British bike but I couldn't afford anything at the time. I think the Dnieper was made in Russia – to be honest it wasn't very good, not very good at all. In fact, as motorcycles go, it was appalling. In the rain it used to run on one cylinder, or stop completely. It was always breaking down. In the end I took the sidecar off and sold the bike to some other bright-eyed kid who thought he could make it work."

"My Dad used to bury his old bikes in the garden when they were worn out and useless – they had no value in those days. I've dug up a couple and have to admit that time has not been kind to them. In retrospect, my Dad had the right approach and I should probably have buried the Dnieper."

While Simon fell back on a succession of lightweight Yamahas for day-to-day transport, his next venture proved even less successful than the Dnieper. A BSA A50, purchased as a non-runner, stubbornly remained a non-runner, to the point when a friend of



his father's, a local VMCC member, persuaded him to join the club and succeeded in convincing him that buying a bike that was running was truly a good all round idea. Simon, being Simon, bought a BSA M21 combo. "In a worst case scenario, tech support was just across the kitchen table at tea time," he said.

The BSA came with no fewer than three sidecars – two spares thrown in for good measure. "The sidecars were a bonus; in fact, they clinched the deal. Old sidecars have a habit of falling apart so you never know when you might need another one." How can you not feel Simon is speaking from experience here? "These days I've got quite a collection hung in the roof space of my workshop."

He rode the M21 on L-plates for 15 years, attended VMCC events, went to rallies – it was, and still is in his opinion, a brilliant bike. "You just have to adjust your pace of life to suit. I never believed that a journey anywhere was not possible, just that from where I was starting, and what I was riding, it might take a little longer."

This was brought home with a vengeance when Simon followed up an advertisement for an AJS V-twin in the VMCC magazine. He lived in mid-Dorset and the AJS was in Hereford. Unfortunately, the vendor gave no telephone number, so the only way to seal the deal was to arrive on his doorstep waving the required wodge of pound notes. On a good day, the journey

TOP:

The twin breathes in through a remote float Amal, which its owner prefers to the twin Concentrics originally fitted to this head

ABOVE:

The (in)famous sprung hub. The small things in life, as author Phil remarks, can make all the difference. Some suspension is better than no suspension. Usually

LEFT:

Simon Cooper and his Triumph – clipping along very nicely, thank you



RIGHT:

The rider's comfort is surely guaranteed with this well-sprung saddle. A pillion is less well catered for, but most things are better than walking

FAR RIGHT:

In a classic piece of irony, the 12V battery that replaced the original 6V item is much smaller, so Simon Cooper produced a bogus 'battery' that actually contains the battery and spares and tools as well...



BELOW:

Seen from the front, this machine really could only ever be a Triumph. Slim, and graced with cool curves everywhere, the mark of Edward Turner's design



time there and back would take approximately six hours. On the M21 combo, and allowing for inevitable hold-ups, Simon reckoned it would probably take that long just to get there. But hey – nothing ventured etc, etc.

After a start later than planned, several wrong turnings, misdirections and traffic hold-ups, he finally pulled-up outside the house at a few minutes before eight o'clock in the evening. It was still light enough to read a note pinned to the front door that read 'Bike Sold'.

"I didn't have the heart to knock – after all, what was I going to say? I just got back on the bike, turned around and headed home."

The journey back seemed to take longer than the ride there, if that was possible, and in the early hours of the following morning, somewhere south of Bristol, Simon realised that fatigue and tiredness were getting the better of him.

"I was hallucinating, on the road but not really on the road. The next I knew, I'd drifted off into a ditch. There was no way I was going to get the bike out on my own, so I covered it over with fern and bits of tree to hide it as best I could and then hitched the rest of the way. I got home just in time to have a bite to eat and go to work. I left a note for Dad, asking if he could pick the bike up in his van, but he phoned me later to say he couldn't find it anywhere. We went

back together that evening and there was the M21 right where I'd left it – although my camouflage was admittedly a lot better than I'd imagined!"

Further testimony of Simon's enthusiasm for riding came when a fellow member of the local VMCC suggested they do the Loch Ness Rally. He spent hours getting the bike ready, packing tools and any spare parts he thought he might need, only to discover at the last minute that the other guy was intending to fly up to Scotland to stay with a mate. Nevertheless, the M21 got him there and back, becoming something of a local legend in the process.

"It was very reliable, but did require a lot of maintenance and inevitably some things broke. I remember the clutch fell off one day and a bloke who stopped to help turned out to have been a previous owner. I seemed to get more than my fair share of punctures and always had a spare engine to hand."

Then came the day when Simon was offered a 650cc BSA A10, which had been owned by a mate's father from new. It was wedded to a Canterbury big wheel chassis with either a Velorex or a Watsonian body, he's not sure which now, and represented a major step up in the world of charioteering. He didn't part with the M21, that was tucked away for the time being while the A10 became the centre of his attentions.

"I lowered the whole outfit and fitted Heddingham



FAR LEFT:

The famous Triumph nacelle and the famous nacelle's instruments, which in this case include a 'Revulator' speedo

ABOVE CENTRE:

The pillion accommodation tries hard, while beneath it lives the surprisingly capacious toolbox...

ABOVE:

...which contains a surprisingly large assortment of tools!

leading link front forks that reduce the trail and take all the weight out of the front end. They take a bit of getting used to, because the steering is quite twitchy when you first get started. I learnt this on the way to a rally in Scotland – I was beginning to get the hang of things by the time we reached Carlisle and everything was fine by Inverness."

Rallying most weekends with the Panther and AJS & Matchless Owners' Clubs, the A10 covered thousands of trouble-free miles until some rather exuberant sparring with another bike north of the border resulted in a snapped con rod.

"In an uncharacteristic moment of good sense I had joined the AA, so for once getting home was not a problem. I spent a day drinking coffee and eating meat pies in what seemed like an unending relay of recovery vehicles that criss-crossed the country in no apparently logical order, but it was far preferable to flailing about on the end of a tow rope for 12 hours."

What Simon hadn't bargained for was the difficulty getting parts for the A10 engine. Being broke didn't help, of course, and in the end his only option was to assemble a Triumph motor from what were essentially scrap (but mostly free) parts and create a Tribsa. The motor held together for two years until the fateful day a piston broke, but in that time Simon had acquired a chopped early 1970s Bonneville, which he set about rebuilding from end to end.

"It wasn't my kind of bike at all. It was an old style chopper with long front forks and lots of moulding, which was well out of date by the time I bought it – but it was incredibly cheap!" The Bonneville proved to be fast, in a straight line, and reliable, but wasn't, he admits, a great bike to ride, and when a group of friends proposed riding to the Stella Alpina Rally in the Italian Alps he brought the M21 out of retirement.

"We had a great time – there were eight of us in all, the oldest bike was a 1927 BSA sloper and I think we counted 21 breakdowns between us there and back. We actually arrived a day late which, the Stella being a weekend event, was the day when everyone

was packing up to go home, but it made me realise how much I had missed the old bike and when I got back I entered it in the Arbuthnot Trial, and a bit later I ended up building an M21 outfit from old bits and pieces just to do trials."

It was around that time that Simon bought the sprung hub Triumph at Netley Marsh. With the experience already gained working on Triumph motors it was an ideal project, and the true value of the Bonneville chopper became apparent when he discovered how interchangeable motor parts were between that and the pre-unit Thunderbird.

"I was just able to fit the one-piece crankshaft into my Myford lathe so I was able to machine the main bearing journals to fit the bearings in the T110 crankcases. Then I cut a thread in the left-hand end of the shaft to hold the engine sprocket without using the alternator."

The alloy, nine-stud cylinder head, 9:1 pistons, Nourish camshafts and 750 Triumph twin rocker boxes all came from the donor bike, but the twin carburettors were ditched in favour of a frugal remote float Amal.

There is, Simon says, more performance in the engine than local country roads will allow, so a restrictive carburettor is not an issue. He did, however, find it necessary to fit a late pattern, five-plate clutch to cope with the engine output and this, in turn, required a slim spacer cut from sheet aluminium to avoid the clutch pressure plate fouling the inside of the primary chaincase cover.

"I didn't want to modify the bike too much because, after all, it was its looks that attracted me to it in the first place. That's why I left the rolling chassis and cycleparts as they are, and kept the old style carburettor and the 6 volt dynamo for the electrics. I pushed the boat out a little with some fresh paint, International Japlac enamel, which I sprayed on the big pieces like the tank, mudguards, frame and headlight nacelle and brush painted small parts like the engine plates and footrests.



ABOVE:

Although the sprung hub is not supposed to offer hairline steering, in the right hands...

BELOW:

Although the front brake will never scorch the tarmac, and the front fork appears a little spindly for a 650, in fact they work well enough together

"I don't remember any serious teething problems apart from a dodgy magneto. I fitted a sidecar to go to the British Bike Rally in Cerizay, just south of Cholet in France, which was just as well as my girlfriend refused to ride back on the pillion seat which, I have to admit, was a bit unforgiving. I've fitted some softer springs since. And I made the rear carrier, which will take two large aluminium pannier boxes, one either side; anything else – shopping, waterproofs, Wellington boots, my lunch box – gets thrown into a rucksack and strapped across the top."

Winter riding revealed the Triumph's only major drawback – the 6 volt lighting system. After using a Honda Dominator single cylinder trailie for his daily commute, Simon realised how woefully inadequate the Triumph's lights were. The dynamo was overhauled with a new armature and field windings to ensure maximum output, a solid state regulator was fitted in a small box underneath the saddle and the Dominator 12 volt battery was put to good use in a modified version of the original battery carrier. The system now runs a 55/60W headlight bulb, providing excellent forward illumination.



The battery being a couple of inches shorter than the original, Simon constructed a deep 'top' from sheet alloy and Lumiweld, which makes a convenient hidey-hole for spare cables, a puncture repair kit and a chain split-link. Serious tools – there's a spanner, screwdriver or Allen key for just about any and every job you might be faced with – are kept in the standard Triumph toolbox, harking back to the days when self-reliance was the only way to survive on two wheels.

"A rear wheel puncture is a pain because the rear mudguard isn't hinged. In its wisdom Triumph made the rear section of the mudguard quickly detachable from a two-bolt fixing underneath the saddle, but this becomes less QD if, like me, you've got a carrier and a pillion seat. But once the wheel is loose I can lay the bike over on its side and slide the wheel out. Beats having to worry about when you last put your mobile phone on charge."

Four years down the road, Simon doesn't show any signs of reverting to the M21 any time soon. Super unleaded petrol and regular changes of the straight 40 oil he uses keep the engine spinning, while Duck Oil deters the rust and maintains the patina of a bike both well used and well loved – but certainly not pampered like a show-only trailer queen.

"I fitted an oil filter kit from Paul Goff, which is a little obtrusive but which, I'm sure, does a great job. It uses Citroën 2CV cartridges and since I own a 2CV I regard this as both a practical and convenient modification. And I've covered the carburettor float chamber with a length of old inner tube to stop rainwater running off the petrol tank and filling it up.

"The exhaust pipes are too low and ground too easily and the back end hops about a bit over 80." Having said that, Simon likes the sprung hub and feels that many local roads would be unrideable without it.

"After riding the Honda Dominator the Triumph felt horrible, it seemed like you could feel every stone in the road. But if you hit a *proper* pothole you're glad of the sprung hub!"

In a desperate situation it would seem that even two inches of suspension movement is better than no movement at all... **CHOC**

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Flying Tiger REBORN

If Carlsberg made a motorbike it would surely look something like the Ducati 900SSD. It would certainly offer the agility of the tiger – the Darmah – it was named after while remaining a rare and sought-after breed

WORDS & PHOTOS BY GRANT FORD





The late Seventies' onslaught from the big four Japanese bike manufactures forced one Italian marque to build not only one of the best looking machines ever but also to give it the longest title possible. The Ducati 900 Super Sport Darmah was the last in a line of equally long-named Seventies Italian machines that many consider to be visually superior to anything available at the time. They are also rare, with around 1000 having been lovingly assembled. Dukes of this era appealed to a certain type of rider, who while not exactly marque-specific clientele certainly enjoyed the more bespoke; individuals who paid little heed to BHP but revelled in the engineering.

The booming exhausts combined with the superb handling of the SSD makes every journey an experience. Movement for the masses? No, considered more of a voyage for the A-road aviator. Surely the old adage that 'you should always have three Ducatis, one for riding and two for the shop' is just a great excuse to gather in as many examples as funds will allow and often beyond.

One guilty collector and complete Ducatisti is Gary Keen, whose 'Bellow Yellow' 750 Sport was featured in April's *CBG*, who in fact built this Darmah alongside his best mate Martin Solomon, and this is one rider who couldn't be happier with his steed. Gary had already completed a 1977 900 Sport Desmo Darmah for Martin, and had other projects either on the way or in mid-build when this Super Sport Darmah arrived from Denmark. Gary had not originally intended to sell the bike on, and he had been scavenging parts from across the globe to assist with the restoration, but space and time limitations meant that Martin would get the prize – after he paid the bill, obviously.

Right from the beginning, this restoration was going to be a full ground up, nut and bolt, as near to original exercise as practically possible, and therefore no budget was put in place, there was little point. The SSD began life with a French registration plate and

DUCATI 900 SUPER SPORT DARMAH



RIGHT:

One Ducati, fresh from Scandinavia and looking like it's been dragged through the North Sea. See the potential

TOP:

The Lafranconi exhausts will be replaced. They aren't eye candy and mute the soundtrack. The broken light, seat and corrosion can all be repaired

ABOVE:

While the wheels faced a refurb, one salvageable part was the brand new rear sprocket once the cobwebs were removed

BELOW RIGHT:

Despite the startling colour scheme, which arrived with the bike, this is the scheme the owner wanted



has the specific ID plates to confirm this. It travelled Switzerland to Denmark, whence it was transported to Sussex to face a perfection chasing transformation over the following year.

DARMAH DISMANTLE

Over the first month the bike was stripped down, details checked and catalogued. Gary inspected every part for wear and projected life expectancy, and

Martin remembers that "parts were photographed and contemplated with a decision demanded to replace, re-use or refurbish; there was to be no compromise and the cost would be the cost."

The frame was fitted with sacrificial bolts to protect the threads, then entrusted to Vulcan Engineering's Dave Murphy, powder-coater of great standing in the classic world down south. Dave also received the centrestand, swinging arm, rear light bracket, chainguard, footrest mounts and instrument console. Martin remembers that, "I got the forks and was told, 'They need polishing mate.' I often got parts to polish rather than anyone allowing me anywhere near the bike with tools in my hands."

Dave also took on the refinishing of the wheels, and although their appearance was poor they were free of damage. These were originally made by FPS, and Gary prefers them to the magnesium versions made by Speedline or Campagnolo with their noted tendency to crack. Dave advised that the polished edges of the wheels prevented powder coating, but that there was another option. Once they'd been blasted they enjoyed a specialist polish and were returned to Dave, who painted the inserts in the correct gold then lacquered them, enabling Martin to re-polish the rims whenever the mood takes him.

ILLUMINATING INGENUITY

The blue-on-blue finish sits remarkably well with the 900. However, the original colour may not be a consideration if you started with a blank canvas. This





scheme is quite daring in fact, offering dark and light blue with white decals and gold wheels all competing with lashings of polished alloy and chrome. An attack on the eyes? Yes perhaps, but it works so well as long as it is perfect. The original fairing bracket had been modified and was therefore useless, but Gary was able to source the correct item as well as – courtesy of Tony Brancato – an original nose cone with screen. This is specific to the SSD, although, as Martin suggests, people often utilise the SS version which is a different shape. GVR Bodywork was tasked with the finish, down in no small part to Martin's suggestion that they are as fussy as Gary. This is backed up by their refusal to fit the new graphics supplied for the nose cone, claiming they just wouldn't sit correctly. Their painter Tony followed manufacturer photographs to paint the graphics before lacquer coats sealed in his art.

SUPER SPORT SCULPTURE

The outsourced parts began to return. First to arrive were the frame, centrestand and swinging arm from Vulcan, and the finish was perfect. Martin tells of the tag team wrestling match refitting the polished motor into position, followed by fresh steering head bearings and yokes – at this point in time things were moving along at a fair pace. The Brembo PO8 twin-nipple calipers had required new seals, plus Teflon-coated pistons and new pads, and were then attached to the refurbished forks with stainless bolts.

Shortly after the wheels arrived, and with new bearings installed plus the original two part discs (now refurbished), the swinging arm was fitted, with



ABOVE:
Job done!

LEFT:
Stripping down ... and building up. The frame required a little attention around the engine mounts, but was mostly in good order, with the usual chips and rust spots

RIGHT:
The idiot lights and console couldn't be sourced NOS, but Gary has brought a similar unit back from the brink before. He found a new bracket and refurbished the console. Once fitted between the ND clocks the view would be factory fresh



DUCATI 900 SUPER SPORT DARMAH



all-new fixings, and the bike stood back on its rubber, courtesy of a pair of BT45s from Bridgestone. Martin described this as a 'milestone moment' and from this point the Duke was flying towards the light at the end of the tunnel.

Spurred on, the rebuilt front brake master cylinder was reunited with the original clip-ons and new hydraulic lines were then bled through. The rear caliper also required new seals, as did the rear master cylinder, but the rear sprocket was already new, saving a few shekels, but was treated to new bolts and locking washers. Delivery drivers were beating a path to Gary's door on an everyday basis and no doubt Martin's credit card was starting to wilt, but sticking to the original plan seemed imperative to avoid any disappointment later.

One of the few non-standard items was the choice of Fournales rear shocks, an upgrade installed by the previous owner, which were refitted. Period correct and popular at the time, the 'Oleo-pneumatic' dispenses with the traditional exterior spring; just air and oil offer the unique ability of never bottoming out. A French manufacturer most popular with the heavyweight custom set, Jean-Pierre Fournales' first designs were aimed at the moto-cross arena, and still available today. These units are not cheap at around three times your basic shock price.

FINAL FITTING

The rolling chassis required a new wiring loom. The old one – in Martin's words – had been 'butchered' and locating a complete, untouched version could have been a challenge. Gary contacted Ducati Paddy, who actually had just the item for the job, so apart



from a couple of earthing issues with the new powdercoat power would be once again available to every bulb and switch.

Gary's ability to track down new old stock parts is legendary, and the tail light plus indicators, all CEV units, and a stainless steel rear mudguard are examples of his locating talents. The idiot lights are unobtainable, so Gary refurbished those and the console himself, thus repeating the similar task he'd performed on his previous restoration of the 750 Sport.

The original Bosch headlight just required some time to perfect, but the Nippon Denso clocks needed specialist treatment. Once the workings had been overhauled, a bespoke crimping tool was utilised, sealing the two halves together. They then sat in freshly chromed bases which cannot even be easily admired, as they're tucked away behind the fairing. Other items sent for chrome included the front down and crossover pipes, linkages for the gears and

CLOCKWISE

FROM ABOVE:

Rear Brembo caliper sports new fittings and lines. The attention to detail is second to none... and that rear strut still looks strange! But it works

Builder Gary Keen (left) and owner Martin Solomon (right). Peace descends on the Sussex countryside as their exhausts fall silent

Finding a NOS CEV rear light unit confirmed Gary's status as the Indiana Jones of the Ducati parts world

Specific to the French imports is the plate confirming the model, year and capacity plus the engine's number

The Fournales Oleo-pneumatic shock and the re-chromed linkage to the refurbished rear master cylinder sit well with the Conti replica cans





Top gunnery. Two classic flying machines stand together



When it comes to exhausts size does matter, as do decibels. The F4 Phantom may be a touch louder than the SSD... but just a touch!

Ducati Twin Timeline

1963: Fabio Taglioni, the man behind Ducati engine designs for decades, pens his and Ducati's first multi. US official importer for the marque Joe Berliner looked to the factory for a machine to take on the Harley dominance of the big cruiser market. Taglioni produced a 1257cc L-four engine of 100bhp for the bike named Apollo of which two prototypes were built, but the project proceeded no further. In some ways, the four was the forerunner of the twin

1970: First sketched in March and at prototype stage by the autumn Taglioni's next multi was a 90-degree L formation twin for the 750GT

1972: Taglioni produced the 750 Imola Desmo, named after the famous 200 mile race won by Paul Smart in 1972, and launches Ducati twins into the big league

1973: The 750 Super Sport Desmo first caught the public eye at the Milan show in November. The first production desmodromic machines, the 750 SS went on sale to the public in 1974

1975: The 900 SS presents a natural evolution for the L twin and the marque's range with its new 860cc motor, which is also offered in a variety of machines

1976: Ex Ducati works rider Leopoldo Tartarini was involved in the development of the first Darmah, the 900SD

1977: The introduction of the Sport Desmo Darmah. Updated and improved over the year, the SD Darmah began to be successful, so much so that the management looked at a Super Sport version for 1978. With very few changes over its production life, the main ones being FPS wheels replacing the Speedlines in 79 and revised foot rests in 1980, the SS Darmah production finished in 1981

1978: Mike Hailwood takes his 900SS to victory in the F1 IOM Tourist Trophy and a race replica for the road is produced to honour the achievement the following year.

The rest is just modern history...

DUCATI 900 SUPER SPORT DARMAH

brakes and the centrestand lifting handle.

Another small change from stock was the fitting of K&N filters to the 40mm Dell'Ortos, the rear carb required an 'in house' sleeve to mount the filter and still fit neatly behind the side panel. Twin Verlicchi throttle and choke cables were then routed to operate the two carbs.

By this time the bodywork had returned from Tony at GVA, and the nose fairing fitted straight into place – confirming the logic of test fitting before sending off for paint. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of the seat unit taken from their SD900. The fit was, in Martin's words "not even close", with incorrect gaps to both the tank and the side panels. The original unit was somehow sourced and found its way to Tony, who had to repeat the process of hand painting the darker blue stripe over the base lighter blue. This proved to be an expensive oversight, but one of very few the guys would make. Both agreed that the original seamed Lafranconi exhausts just didn't cut the mustard, so stainless replicas of the exalted Conti silencers were supplied by Andrew Jones at Mdina Italia. Much to his credit, when one arrived damaged a replacement was instantly sent out with no questions asked.

INCENDIARY IGNITION

Cavis Benz fuel pipes and clips were connected to the tank, and with a new battery fully charged and fitted the moment had arrived. Martin recounts the excitement. "The taps were on, as were the chokes... we waited for the bowls to fill... ignition on and two or three sharp twists of the throttle to get the pumpers working on the carbs. Turn the engine over – it wants to go! Second press and it fired up with a bark to weaken the knees of most grown men, no smoke no drama. It was emotional, relief obviously and joy definitely, but mostly excitement as the open road beckoned.

Everyone knows of Alf's Motorcycles but not everyone knows the man is a guru of the bevel motor.



The Darmah takes flight. It's probably as loud as the Harrier...

After checking the valve clearances Alf let the SSD tear up his rolling road and as Martin says, he soon had it purring, not so much a kitten, more of a lion with its knackers in a vice.

The MoT test was passed and the ride home was a thought-provoking time, running through all the trials and tribulations of the build mixed with the pride of having one of the finest Super Sport Darmahs available. Available anywhere! **MBG**

■ Many thanks to both Martin and Gary for their contributions and time in putting together the SSD story and the kind folk at Tangmere Aviation Museum in Sussex who allowed us access to their powerful display



1980 Ducati 900 Super Sport Darmah Specification

ENGINE:

Four-stroke longitudinal 90 degree L-twin. Light alloy heads and cylinders with cast-iron liners. Bore & stroke 86 x 74.4mm. 864cc, 64bhp. Desmodromic sohc bevel gears, two valves per cylinder

CARBURETTORS:

2 x 40mm Dell'Orto PHM

TRANSMISSION:

5-speed. Wet multi-plate clutch

FRAME: Tubular double-cradle frame; stressed engine

FRONT SUSPENSION: Marzocchi tele hydraulic

REAR SUSPENSION:

Swinging arm with Fournales Ole-pneumatic shock absorbers

FRONT BRAKES:

Twin 280mm discs, Brembo calipers

REAR BRAKE:

229mm disc, Brembo caliper

FRONT TYRE:

3.50 x 18

REAR TYRE:

4.60 x 18

FUEL TANK:

19 litres

SEAT HEIGHT:

770mm

WEIGHT:

196kg



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YESTERDAY ONCE MORE

Although the Triton marriage of Triumph engine with Norton bicycle was a UK-spawned product, they also appear on the opposite side of the world

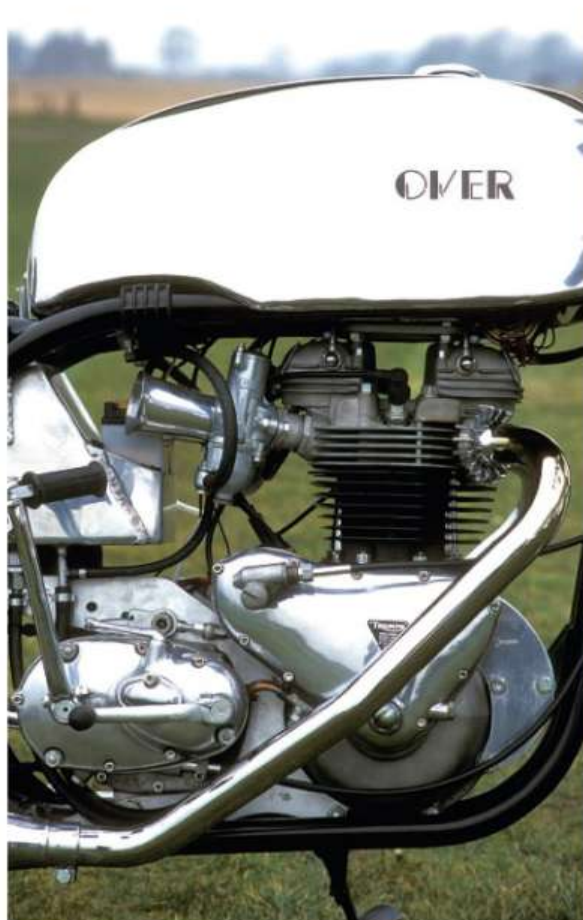
WORDS BY ALAN CATHCART
PHOTOS BY KYOICHI NAKAMURA

As in many big cities, spending Sunday in Tokyo allows you to lift the veil on people and places hidden during weekdays by the frantic pace of workaday life. And in Japan of all places, it permits those free spirits driven by necessity to conform to corporate expectation six days a week, to come out of their shells and be anyone they want to be – if only for a single day.

Catch a Sunday subway from the Ginza to Omotesando, and be prepared for some surprises. First one comes as you emerge from the station, to be confronted by a street that's a passable imitation of a tree-lined Paris boulevard. Walk along it, past all the shop windows flaunting European haute couture, and into Yoyogi-koen, the park at the end. As you get closer to the park gates, suddenly the past comes alive. The nostalgic but unmistakable sounds of Gene Vincent, Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran and The King (Elvis: who else?) boom out across Yoyogi Park, courtesy of the latest and greatest high-volume hardware produced by the Japanese audio industry – and as you turn the corner by the gate, you find out why.

On Sundays, Yoyogi-koen is the gathering point for the *takenoko-zoku* – literally, the 'bamboo shoot tribe': don't ask! – a bunch of modern rock 'n' rollers from all over Tokyo who meet up here each weekend for some personal show 'n' go. Dressed in early-60s drainpipes, candy-coloured zoot suits and high-school prom frocks, topped with carefully-coiffed, greased-back DA haircuts and back-combed beehive hairdos, these guys 'n' gals are history on legs, jiving and jitterbugging in a way that any late-50s New Yorker would have been proud of. For this is East Side Story, but in 2015.

The Japanese didn't participate in the rock 'n' roll era first time around, for two good reasons: one, the country was still rebuilding itself after the



TOP LEFT:

The beast at the heart of the bigger beast is a pre-unit Triumph engine, reworked and rebuilt to perform as well as they can. For no reason we have ever understood, the exhaust pipes are swept back, which can't help the gas flow much

ABOVE:

Norton Roadholder forks mate perfectly with the Norton frame, and using Commando-style exposed stanchions and seals emphasises the slim, trim appearance. A Grimeca 4ls drum provides the anchorage, and should be well up to doing the job

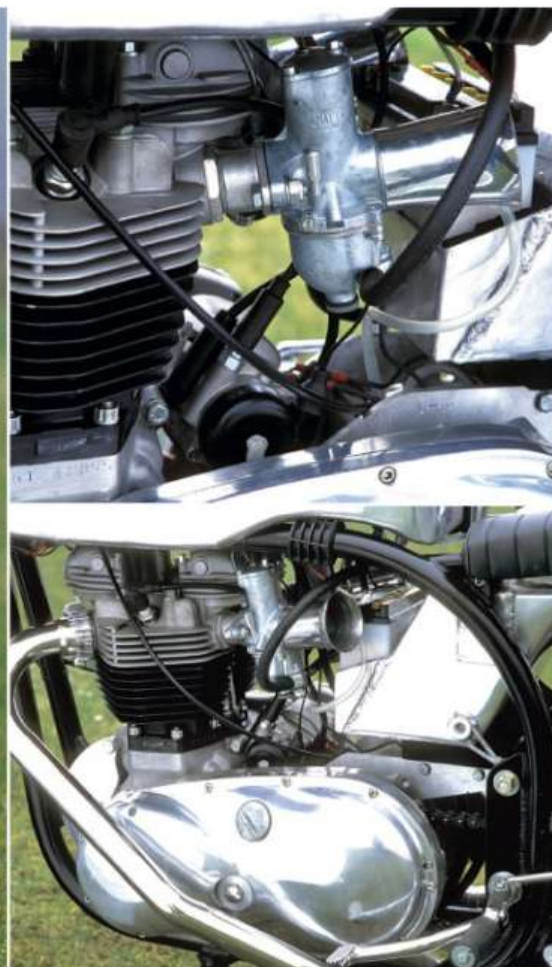
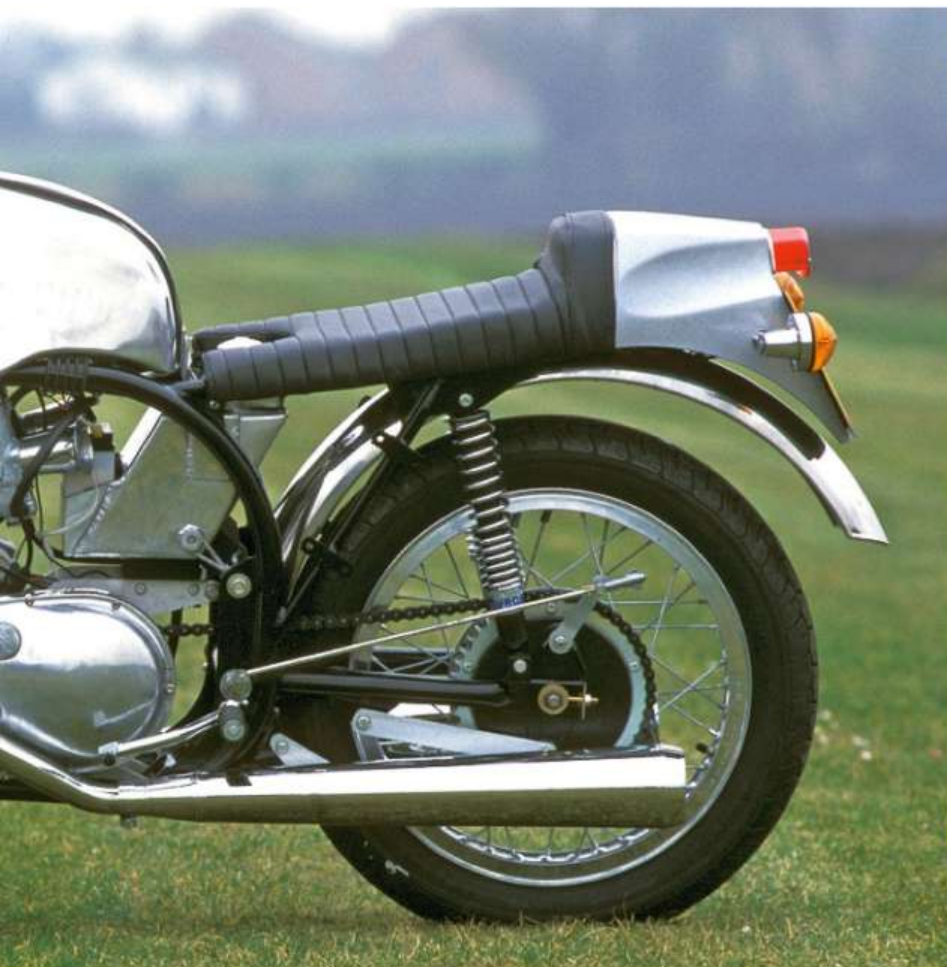
Second World War, and two, such so-called Western decadence was still frowned on. So, now they're catching up on lost time – and just as motorcycles were an integral part of the Fab Fifties and Swinging Sixties, so the cult of the café racer is a key element in the rockin' revival now hitting Japan big time. Which explains why astute Over boss Kensei Sato, best known around the world for his title-winning Supermono racers and other Yamaha-based sportbikes, and in Japan for his leading-edge engine tuning and aftermarket exhaust business, has opened a 60s-style dealership in downtown Tokyo called Boys Cafe, stocked with pudding basin helmets, black leather jackets – and retro roadsters made in India (Over is one of Japan's largest Royal Enfield dealers), as well as closer to home. For, working through his British agents TGA, Sato has imported and sold a fleet of Over Triton café racers specially built in Europe, for sale in Japan. Bamboo shoot bikes for born-again rockers – yesterday once more.

Triton. For those who remember it first time around, the name clicks the on-switch in the memory bank, and the mind images start rolling on the screen. Jailhouse Rock, Kid Creole, Bill Haley and the Big Bopper. Brylcreem on your hair, espresso coffee in the cup, white chin scarves and, if you wore a helmet at all, it was a pudding basin. Mods and rockers, bank holiday punch-ups on Brighton beach, and anyone who rode a bike that wasn't British needed their head examined, which you might very well oblige by undertaking with the aid of a bicycle chain and a set of knuckledusters (mind you, Harleys were okay if you could afford one, but few could).

The Ace Cafe, the Busy Bee, the Chelsea Bridge Mob and café racing 60s-style, involving death-defying (well, usually) burn-ups along the North Circular Road round central London, up the Great North Road heading in the general direction of Bonnie Scotland, along the Watford bypass or through the series of corners marked 'Deceptive Bends' on the Brighton Road near Dorking. You had to queue to be one of the 40,000 spectators at a Brands Hatch bike meeting, unemployment was non-existent, and the pound in your pocket bought four gallons of top-grade four-star petrol. Yeah, those were the days, in the Triton years...

A 60s hybrid most often created by marrying a twin-cylinder Triumph engine with the Featherbed frame from a Norton single, the Triton was the archetypal café racer of the period, arguably deriving all the more street cred from the fact that you couldn't buy one from a dealer: you had to build your own. Because there was no such thing as a catalogued Triton street bike, that made each one built different from the next – but it also means that the Over Triton is arguably the first-ever production Triton. While being largely constructed using period engine parts, each of the 30 or so built to date via Over's British agent Graham Boothby of TGA have at Sato's request shared a basically identical specification. So, at last, here we have a production Triton, originally made for Japan, but now being marketed around the world by TGA as retro hardware, but with modern convenience. Well, once you learn how to kick-start it first time, that is...

Such is the bike I spent a spring day aboard,



reliving my misbegotten tearaway youth by café racing round the roads near TGA's base in the hinterland of Liverpool. Well, okay, I suppose rock 'n' roll and The Beatles did sort of spill over into each other for a while. I can remember going to a mid-60s Beatles concert at the Worcester Gaumont where man-in-black Roy Orbison was actually top of the bill, and the scouser Mop-Tops merely closed the first half.

Visually, this Over Triton is a bit of a bamboo tribe bike that's a mix of authentic and imaginary, with the rather iffy seat designed in Japan, and the slightly bulbous fuel tank made to an Over design that TGA admits is a sort of generic blend between a Rickman tank and a large Manx Norton. Still, it all looks sorta okay, even if Boothby says the bikes he's now starting to build for the North American and European markets will have more period aesthetics, looking the way it really was, not how it might have been....

Nothing spurious about the Triton's technicalities, though, with the ohv Triumph engine built from period parts to standard-spec, big-bearing, late-model TR6/6T/T120 pre-unit guise. TGA starts out with a readily-obtainable period Thunderbird motor, but within the reconditioned crankcases sits a one-piece crank from a later unit-construction model (much stiffer than the bolted-up three-piece pre-unit part), fitted with the latest, widest rods Triumph ever made, and the 9.5:1 pistons and barrels from a period Morgo 750 conversion, which bumps up capacity from the 649cc of the original pre-unit motor to the 744cc of a later Bonneville. The lower compression pistons can be replaced by a high-comp option at the customer's discretion, but

MAIN:

It's maybe remarkable that although Tritons are supposedly engineered to adopt the best bits of two bikes, to many the style is the most important thing

TOP:

A closer look reveals that the engine plates are a set from the well-known Converta folk, while the barrels providing the extra cubes are Morgo. The battery lives in its own compartment built as a frontal extension to the central oil tank

ABOVE:

The view from the driveside demonstrates how much longer the original Norton powertrain was than the Triumph that has replaced it. As the frame is a new one, there might have been an opportunity to shorten the main frame to suit the engine and reduce the length of the final drive

LEFT:

Trim indeed, and of its age, despite the oddly intrusive indicators

although in standard guise all Over Tritons built so far have run happily on regular unleaded fuel, TGA can install harder exhaust valve seats to special order for any customer who wants to be sure of carefree café racing.

A plunger oil pump and the sporty late-model E3134 Bonnie cams that have the same sort of place in Triumph lore as Ducati's Imola lifters or a set of Yoshis for your Z-model Kawasaki, are used – the later they were made, the better the material, says TGA's Triton guru Jim Hiddlestone – with a nitrided exhaust, stock pushrods, the timing cover modified for an end seal to allow an oil feed to the crank, and a pair of 30mm Mk.1 Amal Concentrics (though a pair of 32mm items is a power-up option, perhaps with bigger inlet valves). Cylinder head comes from a late 60s Bonneville with stock valves and a mild flow job, while ignition comes courtesy of a period Lucas K2F magneto with manual advance – the stock 39° ignition timing is maintained. In this form, the mildly improved motor delivers just less than 50bhp at 7000rpm at the rear wheel, transmitted via a standard four-speed pre-unit Bonneville gearbox and four-spring clutch, with simplex chain primary drive. "But these are real horses, not ponies!" claims Hiddlestone. And, you know what? He's right...

To give birth to the Over Triton, this rebuilt period motor is mated with a replica Manx Norton Featherbed frame, built to the highest levels of authenticity in Reynolds 531 tubing, and fitted with a tapered swinging arm just as Back Then, in spite of the restriction on tyre width this entails. New replica Roadholder forks from Andover Norton, built to Commando spec but modified for Triton use, sit in



yokes replica-milled from solid alloy – the supply of original iron ones dried up years ago.

A pair of Hagon shocks, built to TGA spec with 14kg springs but the softest damping available, suspend the period BSA/Triumph conical rear hub with seven-inch SLS drum brake, while up front the stopping is taken care of by that favourite from the café racers' catalogue, a 4LS Grimeca drum. Combining period Smiths' instruments with Japanese switchgear and new-old-stock genuine Lucas electrics, including the chrome-back headlamp mounted on Tomaselli brackets, provides a practical mix of old 'n' new, though rather than the alloy mudguards favoured in the period, today's Triton uses stainless steel ones because, says Hiddlestone, it's impossible to get good-quality alloy guards that are shaped right, and which will put up with the wear and tear caused by vibration.

That is not to say that the Over Triton is deficient in that department, anything but. I should own up

RIGHT:

Although the megaphone-style silencers are exactly correct for a traditional Triton, these appear to be angled unusually, as Alan Cathcart demonstrated while grounding them on the road

BELOW:

The whole point of the excellent Featherbed frame is that it can be cornered at acute angles. The silencers do appear to limit the exuberance a little





here and admit that I've never cared much for big-cube British parallel-twins, on the grounds that while shake, rattle 'n' roll was all part of the music scene's Presley era, I'd much rather not have to put up with the same thing on a motorcycle – and most Triumph or Norton 360° big twins I've ridden vibrated hard as soon as you revved 'em. The Benelli 650 Tornado I've owned for the past 15 years is the Italian idea of what a British twin could have been but never was, and even revved hard in standard short-stroke guise is much smoother than a corresponding BritBike (only, it has Italian electrics, too...). But stacked up against the Over Triton's Hiddlestone-built Triumph motor... there's not much in it, I'd say.

This was a big surprise. Even though a 750 rather than the much sweeter 500, the Triton's engine is very smooth – perhaps down to a different balance factor on the late-model crank? “No, we use the standard balance factor,” says Jim Hiddlestone, “but with a lot of care over selective assembly. It was common in the classic era for people to mix 'n' match conrods of varying widths or pistons of different weight, for example, and things like this are really important to get right if you want to build a smooth motor. Even though Royal Enfield was the only factory to dynamically balance its engines, most British twins ran pretty smoothly when they left the factory, even though the engines had only been statically balanced. The problems arose later, especially as back in the classic era about 90% of bikes were owner-maintained, instead

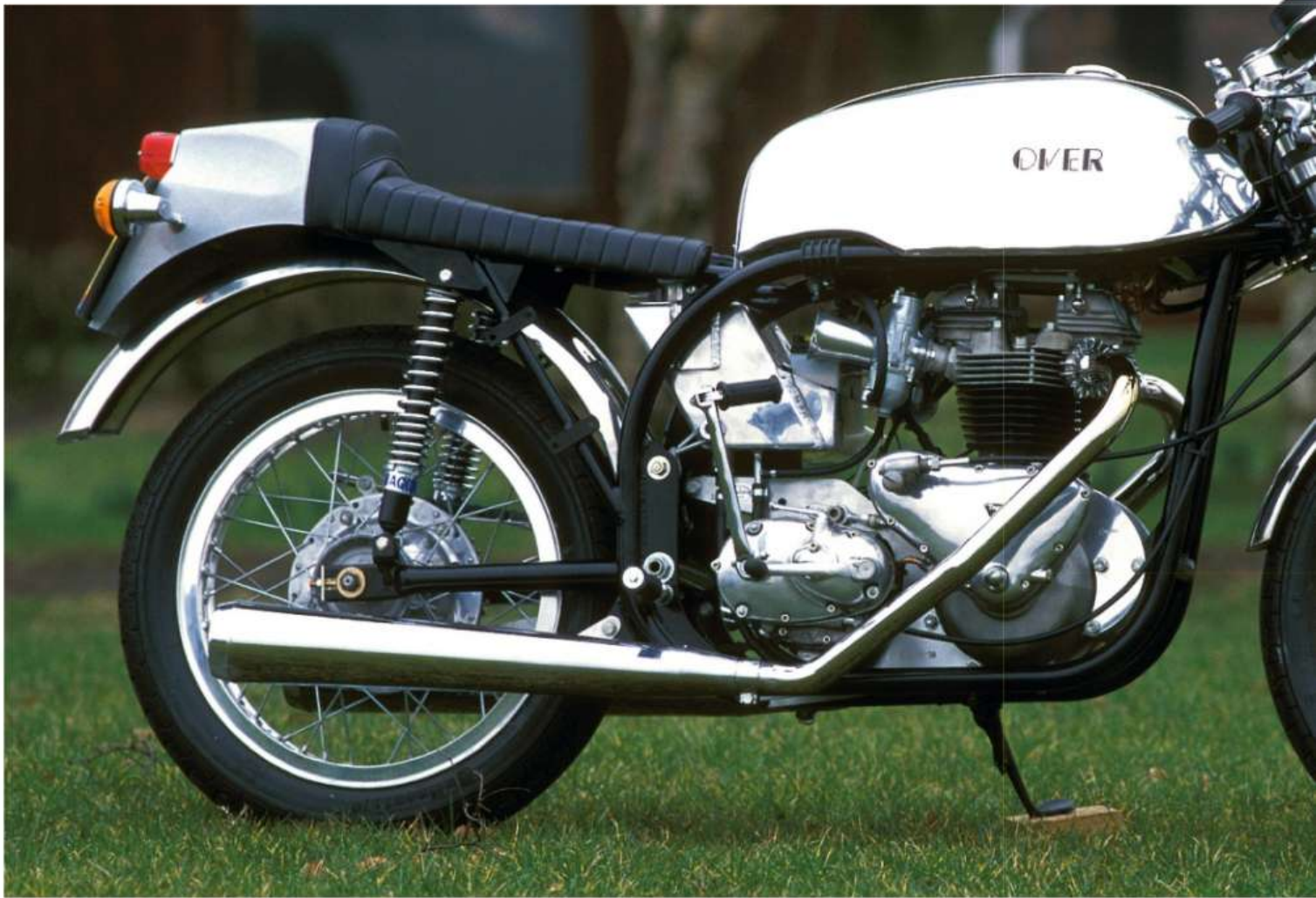


of the complete opposite as it is today. We weigh everything before assembly, and take care in matching components – it's the only way to blueprint the engine, and get it the way Edward Turner designed it to be!”

Starting from cold was a problem on the Triton, though – and not because I'm a twin-cylinder kick-starting wimp (which may be true, but I get lots of practice on my Benelli Tornado 650, thanks to its Italian electric starter motor), but because there are no chokes on the Amal Concentrics. So, even with full retard on the ignition lever and both carbs tickled to death, the Triton refused to fire up even with a practised kick (i.e. not mine), leaving no alternative but a run 'n' bump in best classic racing (as opposed to café racing) mode – preferably downhill, with much flapping of the throttle arm once it finally starts to pick up.

LEFT:

Clip-on bars, several cables, a brutal steering damper knob, lots of chrome to polish and trad-style clocks to admire. Café chic

**ABOVE:**

The engine may be an old one, but the frame is new. A subtle difference maybe, but sometimes important

Graham Boothby says this is the first of the many Tritons TGA has built that this proved a problem on – but while Japan in summer may deliver optimum kick-starting conditions, Britain in winter masquerading as spring does not: I'd opt for a choke lever if I were a born-again café racer. But once warmed up and ready to go, the Triton starts easily first kick, thanks to the low compression ratio and apparently clean carburation, then settles to a fast 2000rpm idle accompanied by the booming burble from the twin sweptback exhausts that's the trademark signature tune of a Triumph twin. Perhaps the tickover's a little too high, because notching bottom gear on the one-up right-foot lever – no left-side change linkage, even for Japan! – invites a graunch from the gearbox at such a high engine speed, but that's easily adjusted and now (having remembered to fold down the right flip-up footrest again after kick-starting duties are completed), you're ready for racer road.

At this point you discover that the flipped-down right footrest is too short to allow your foot to rest on it properly and wrap around the kick-start lever at

the same time. Solution is to ride the bike the way it deserves to be ridden, which is in full café racer mode with your toes on the footrests, chest on the tank and – if I'd only remembered to wear one – the ends of the white silk scarf wrapped round my chin fluttering in the wind. The long reach to the Tomaselli clip-ons encourages such a stance, allowing a good view of the chromed shell of the Lucas headlight, as well as the twin Smiths' clocks and masses of cables running everywhere, which combine to convey a period feel and remind you of The Way It Was.

Authentic, too, is the bone-hand seat, one step up from being a vinyl-covered plank, which although it looks like a two-seater is in fact built just for one (no pillion footrests, see – though TGA says a passenger can be catered for, if the customer wishes), giving room to slide your bum back against the numberplate squab when you're flat on the tank. The only downside to all this is that you have to lift your right foot off the rest in order to change gear, though the four-speed box has a clean, positive change once you get to second. Changing up from bottom gear is a bit awkward, with neutral making its presence felt more often than not. There's quite a big gap between third gear and top, and downward changes require some contortion, because of the short footrest.

But once you get the engine motoring, all the traditional benefits of a British big twin are there in spades: loads of torque delivered in a strong, unburstable-seeming fashion, yet with an appetite for revs that must have made a marked contrast in

'I know it's become a cliché, but truly and honestly no motorcycle chassis ever delivered the poised handling of the Featherbed frame until the arrival of the modern era...'



the era with the more lazy-revving pushrod singles that comprised the bulk of Britbike production, as well as fodder for the Triton to feed off in on-the-road shootouts. The trademark twang from the chrome megaphone 'silencers' adds to the allure: you don't need to be a born-again rocker to appreciate the buzz you get from riding this bike – and the fun.

But even with the sportier cams, it's a forgiving motor, pulling cleanly from 2000rpm upwards without any spitting back through the carbs as 60s-era café racers were prone to do, and aiming strongly at the seven-grand redline once above the 4000rpm mark on the Smiths' revcounter. There is a little vibration above that point, but nothing you can't put up with, and certainly not like the racing Weslake twins I've ridden that try to shake the mercury loose from your fillings.

Changing up at around 5500rpm didn't seem to affect acceleration unduly, and rather to my surprise, the Triton was quite user-friendly in traffic, the only drawback being the stretched-out riding stance. But the torquey, responsive and forgiving engine, coupled with the smooth, light-action clutch, made town work untiring – if still merely an overture for the open road...

And that's where the Triton excels, because the handling is peerless Featherbed-style – rock-steady round fast sweepers, relatively nimble thanks to the low-slung weight round tighter turns, and with only a trace of understeer under power to remind you of the 19in front wheel, though this is easy to correct thanks to the light steering with its fingertip precision.

I know it's become a cliché, but truly and honestly no motorcycle chassis ever delivered the poised handling of the Featherbed frame until the arrival of the modern era – and modern suspension – and the Triton's frame completely fulfils expectations. The modified Commando forks shrug off bumps and ripples in the road surface in a way you'd be happy with a set of upside-downers doing on a modern sportbike, and the compliant damping of the Hagon shocks made sure they worked properly (as well as giving good ride quality by the standards of the period) by using their full stroke. They're not oversprung or overdamped, so that you get tossed up off the seat each time you hit a bump.

Riding the Over Triton along the twisting country roads behind TGA's HQ was not as advertised. Instead of a vintage-seeming retrobike it appeared surprisingly modern, not only because of the unexpectedly compliant suspension that allows it to shrug off road shock, but also because of the grip from the Continental Super Twin rubber, which I must admit I'd never sampled before. TGA fits an 18in rear tyre because Continental only make a 19in front, and though the downside of this is that you find out quite quickly that the twin exhaust silencers are set much too low, the confidence you get from such a high degree of grip means you're encouraged to start riding this modern café racer the way it was meant to be ridden – hard and fast. When you do, you'll find you have to squeeze unduly hard on the lever to get the 4LS Grimeca front brake to stop



TOP RIGHT:

The man who made it happen:
Over boss Kensei Sato

ABOVE:

It's a Japanese style thing; and here are some Japanese being appropriately stylish. Meet the *takenoko-zoku*, literally, the 'bamboo shoot tribe'

OVER TRITON

RIGHT:

Ready, as we say, for the off



properly – which it will do, without grabbing, but not as well as the identical brake fitted to my Benelli: set-up, or choice of linings may be a factor here – but in any case, to get the Triton to anchor up harder, just stamp on the foot pedal and the surprisingly effective BSA/Norton rear drum will do its bit in making what at 175kg dry is quite a light bike by pre-unit Triumph standards stop properly.

I wouldn't say I'm set to choose the Over Triton over an R1 Yamaha, but as an example of making the past come alive in a modern context, it rivals the bamboo shoot tribe's jitterbugging – but with one important difference: you don't have to dress up in the kind of clothes we were glad to have forgotten ever existed in order to have fun on the Triton. With the worldwide nostalgia boom showing no sign of abating, TGA's decision to start worldwide marketing of a yesteryear bike that's spent the past few years having any detail problems shaken out of it in the world's toughest bike market, makes added sense. Especially as customers in countries such as the USA and Germany that are wrapped up in red tape should have no trouble registering the TGA Triton for the street as a historic motorcycle, thanks to its period engine and classic chassis. Appreciating the past through the products of the present offers a practical trip down memory lane – even for those who never took that ride first time around. Especially in Japan. **CBC**



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■ **Above:** You already know this of course, but the Milk Race was an incarnation (ha!) of the Tour of Britain, which involved (person powered) bicyclists racing around Britain wearing slogans for the Milk Marketing Board. All very sensible. How could anyone expect a marshal on a BSA Starfire to keep up with a racing bicyclist?

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MORTONS ARCHIVE

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This photo was found in the Mortons Archive, a huge collection of varied images from over a century of motorcycling. Whether it's a rider from the golden era, a showroom photograph of a rare bike model, unseen images from inside the old industry, or a racing

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British Classic Buyer's Guide

Buying a classic bike is easy, although identifying which classic is your own particular dream bike may be less so. What is also easy – too easy – is to get the exact spec wrong, or the price wrong. There are, for example, many different Triumph Bonneville's, and if you decide that your life will only be complete if shared with a Bonnie then you need to know which sort of Bonnie you want to share it with. It all sounds simple, but it's not. Sometimes. If you know you want a 1965 T120TT and nothing else, you'll be fine.

Sticking with the Bonnie idea, if you want the whole 1950s Rocker thing, complete with pre-unit charm, genuine Edward Turner styling and a glorious tangerine paint job, then you are not going to be happy with a 1972 T120

rather than a T120 from 1959 or so. This applies to all marques and all models. Before you spend your money, go ride a few of the bikes on your shortest short list. Join the relevant owners' club – that part is essential; join the club before you spend your money – so you can meet owners, maybe even ride their bikes, and learn about the reality of life with your dream bike.

It is always a great idea to study prices too. Stay aware of the movements in the market; it's so much better to buy a Bonnie for Bantam money than the other way around!

And if you need specific advice, don't hesitate to ask us here at Classic Bike Guide; we've bought more bikes than most between us, and made most of the mistakes, too...



How to use the guide

This guide is as exhaustive as we could fit into our pages. We'll update it two or three times a year as we trawl the marketplace, and this Britbike guide alternates with a Japanese guide as well as a survey of European classics. We offer you just two prices; the CBG High Price is for a top-notch, top-spec model in excellent condition. You might not win concours awards with the bike, but you'd expect to be a contender. At that price, your target machine should have a new MoT, its tyres should sparkle, its chrome and alloy should be excellent. Its paint should not be dull, and it should run like the dream machine you're after. Oil should not dribble from its casings, it should start easily and readily. If it has more than one carb, then they should be balanced and the bike should tick

over reliably. There should be no smoke, and although a stack of receipts is not essential, you should find evidence that whoever did the restoration work knew what they were doing. Cables should be entirely un-frayed, the controls should fall readily to hand and foot, and the lighting system should both lighten the darkness and charge its own battery. Accept nothing less.

Also accept that if you make the increasingly astute decision to buy from a trader then you are quite likely to pay more than our High Price. Traders make a living supplying folk like us with the bikes we want, tolerate endless tyre-kicking, usually accept trade-ins, and they should provide decent after-sales service. All this costs them, and they need to make a profit.

The CBG Low Price is for a complete motorcycle. The bike may have the dregs of an MoT. It will certainly run and ride, although it may not be entirely sorted. Most of all, it may not be standard, the engine and frame may not have been paired in the factory, it may be cosmetically challenged, with rusty exhausts, a split seat and drooping unlubricated cables, and sundry systems may not work. It may be a less popular version of a popular model: that 1971 'tall' T120 Bonneville springs to mind. It may easily be what we used to refer to as a 'working' bike. Classic workers are less common now than they once were, but they are still about.

There are two other categories which it is entirely impossible to quote prices for. The first is the entirely original and unrestored

motorcycle. These machines are – obviously – increasingly hard to find, and some folk will pay a high premium for them. Indeed, 'barn find' machines often fetch astonishingly high prices because they're unrestored ... although you can rarely know that for a fact. Lots of older, 1980s, say, restorations are passed off as 'original' barn finds. Often they're not original at all.

The second category is the concours winner; the completely elegant machine which is better by far than it was when it first invaded a showroom. When these bikes change hand in the public marketplace (and many of them change hands inside clubs, advertised only by word of mouth) their prices can be very high indeed. We cannot offer guidance here; what you pay is up to you.

Happy hunting...

AJS & MATCHLESS

By 1950, Associated MotorCycles Limited in South London were building bikes under both AJS and Matchless badges, and at one time boasted the largest factory in the world dedicated to motorcycles production. They later acquired the Norton marque, at first keeping production in Birmingham but eventually moving Norton in with AJS and Matchless. AMC also built James and Francis-Barnett motorcycles (also in the Midlands and not at Plumstead). So the varied range of models offered under the AMC banner stretched from 98cc 2-strokes all the way through to stonking 750cc 4-stroke superbikes. The company was also successful in two-wheeled sports, and apart from the dedicated and highly specialised road-racers they also built a lot of competition-biased roadsters. The whole lot collapsed in 1966, and was reborn as Norton-Villiers, concentrating on the Norton Commando series and a range of 2-stroke AJS off-riders.

Model designations are shown for AJS, with Matchless equivalents shown in brackets, as the two marques increasingly differed only in finish and trim styles. The bikes are very solid, well-engineered and rewarding to ride. Spares are plentiful, and they boast an excellent and very active Owners' Club.

Model 14 (Matchless G2)
248cc (70 x 65mm) ohv single ||
340lb || 75mpg || 1958-66

AMC UNDERSTOOD THAT they needed a lightweight 4-stroke motorcycle to rival Triumph's Cub and BSA's C-range. Intelligently, they used a bicycle based on their James 2-strokes and designed their own new 4-stroke engine to fit. That engine appeared to be of 'unit'

construction (where engine and gearbox are built into shared castings), but the gearbox was separate and cylindrical, attached to the crankcases by a pair of steel straps. The 250s and the similar 350s were not a commercial success and are not widely sought-after today. However, they are fun to ride (CSR 250s in particular) and offer a low-cost intro to classic motorcycling with plentiful spares and simple construction for straightforward spannering. The best are the AMC-forked versions and the late CSRs. As with most AMC models, the 250 was available in standard, 'S' (chrome mudguards), CS (off-road styling), and CSR (café-racer) versions.

Prices
low £1350 || high £2250

Model 8 (Matchless G5)
348cc (72 x 82.5mm) ohv single ||
350lb || 70mpg || 80mph || 1960-62

BIGGER VERSION OF the Model 14, built with better forks taken from the early 1950s heavyweight but with a slightly feeble brake from the 2-stroke range. They provide a better ride than the early 250s, although by 1962 there was nothing between them apart from better torque. The 350s didn't last long as they competed with AMC's own heavyweight 350 singles, without being better, just slightly lighter. Surprisingly quick and pleasant to ride.

Prices
low £1500 || high £2250

Model 16 (Matchless G3)
348cc (69 x 93mm until 1963
then 72 x 85.5mm) ohv single ||
400lb || 80mpg || 75mph || 1945-66

SOUNDLY ENGINEERED AND finished trad Brit single. AMC singles are immensely strong, engineered to cover countless miles with little maintenance and no complaint. They started as rigid machines very close to the wartime Matchless WD G3L, then switched to swinging arm suspension. The late 50s models with alternator lighting and half-



NORTON ES2 1955. Bought as a project in the 1980s when it came in big bits and several boxes. Has been used on and off since then, clocking up a thousand miles since 1998. Will need general fettling. Note it's not a featherbed!

SOLD for £2600

decent brakes matched to fine handling are the most common, although the rigid-framed models have a considerable minimalist cachet. Also unusual although not particularly popular are the 1964-on versions, with their (relatively) short-stroke engine, Norton forks and wheels. Rigid fetch the highest prices, but spares for the later ones are easier. Very easy bike to live with; very few faults.

Prices
low £2000 || high £2600 (CS
comp models a lot more)

Model 18 (Matchless G80)
498cc (82.5 x 93mm until 1963
then 86 x 85.5mm) ohv single ||
400lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1945-66

THE 500 VERSION of the very trad AMC single really is a bigger version of the 350, with a bit more of everything. Excellent riders' machines; classic in every way. They share almost all the components apart from the piston, flywheels, barrel and head with the smaller engine, which gives them a tendency to knock out some pattern big ends very quickly. However, this is not the problem it was, as the quality of AMC spares continues to

improve. This is a pleasant touring motorcycle, with good handling and comfort allied to a relaxed 60mph cruising speed. It's easy to convert a 350 single to a 500 as the strokes are the same, but to run smoothly they need the 500's flywheels too...

Prices
low £2200 || high £4000
(CS comp models a lot more)

Model 20 (Matchless G9)
498cc (66 x 72.8mm) ohv twin ||
410lb || 60mpg || 90mph || 1948-61

AMC'S TWIN TOOK a different path to the already established designs from BSA, Triumph, etc. So the engines are unusual, having a third main bearing between the cylinders, and separate barrels and cylinder heads. The engine is a notably clean design, with no external oil plumbing to spoil the lines and leak at the joints. It was never particularly popular with the sporting riders, although it was a handsome motorcycle and reliable enough. There were no rigid-framed or plunger-framed twins. Gradual development included the switch from a Burman gearbox to one of AMC's own design (aka the Norton gearbox, which went on to handle the power of the Commando!) in

SOLD AS SEEN



BSA ROYAL STAR, 1964. An older restoration which would now benefit from a little TLC. Originally exported to the USA, repatriated in 1991. Restored in the late 1990s, done 3000 miles, currently 'running well'. Comes with paperwork and spares.

SOLD for £2600

1956. The 'jampot' rear suspension was replaced by Girling units the following year. This is a good, reliable conservative motorcycle. Late ones are rare and very good, with alternator electrics and excellent duplex frames. Early jampot models can have odd handling and poor brakes.

Prices

low £2500 || high £4000

Model 30 (Matchless G11)
593cc (72 x 72.8mm) ohv twin ||
410lb || 60mpg || 90mph || 1956-58

AS NORTON (under AMC ownership) took their 500cc Dominator 88 and stretched it into the 600cc Dominator 99, so AMC stretched their own 500 twin, simply over-boring it a little to provide the extra capacity. This is the least common of the AMC twins, and the 600s have been described as the best model in the series. The sports (CS) version is very unusual, very handsome and will cost an easy £1000 more than an equivalent standard roadster, and the very rare CSR version may fetch even more.

Prices

low £2500 || high £4000

Model 31 (Matchless G12)
646cc (72 x 79.3mm) ohv twin ||
430lb || 55mpg || 100mph ||
1959-66

THE MOST COMMON AMC twin. The earliest models were plainly a

stroked stretch of the 600cc Model 30, and developed an over-exaggerated reputation for fragility. The early 650 crank was supposed to be delicate, but only the alternator versions, which carried the massive alternator rotor on a drive-side crankshaft extension, had problems. AMC responded by forging post-1960 cranks in a very tough nodular iron. The post '61 models are very sound, if slightly staid, machines. In common with the rest of the heavyweight range, they acquired Norton forks and wheels for 1964, along with 12V electrics. Again, genuine CS and CSR versions will hold 25% higher prices, but watch out for fakes.

Prices

low £2500 || high £4500

Matchless G15/45
749cc ohv twin || 430lb || 50mpg ||
105mph || 1963

CONSCIOUS OF THE ever-growing demand – particularly in America – for more power, AMC stretched their engine out to 750cc and offered the Matchless G15/45 (there was no AJS equivalent) for sale in the US. It was strangely unsuccessful. Myth suggests that the engine was unreliable, vibratory and not very good, but repatriated bikes are very pleasant, beefy torque-deliverers, and sound in wind and limb. The idea of a 750 twin was resurrected in 1963-4, but the new model used the Norton Atlas engine to power a range of models collectively known as 'AMC hybrids'.

Prices

low £6500 || high £9000, if you can find one

Model 33 (Matchless G15)
745cc (73 x 89mm) ohv twin ||
420lb || 45mpg || 110mph ||
1964-68

FOLLOWING THE SALES failure of the G15/45, AMC dropped the donkey from their Norton Atlas 750 twin into an AJS / Matchless chassis to create the Matchless 750 twin. The result is a terrific motorcycle, far more rewarding to ride than the sum of its parts suggests it should be. The legendary Atlas shakes are much reduced in the hybrids, perhaps because the heavy lugged AMC frame absorbs more energy than the welded Norton featherbed. The 750 hybrids came in three forms, a 'Mk2' UK-style trad roadster, a 'CS' street scrambler version, and a 'CSR' café racer. Confusingly, the CS and CSR versions can be very similar, especially US-spec models. The AJS versions are very rare and therefore expensive.

The final hybrids used the same engine squeezed into the cycle parts of the Matchless G85CS scrambler, replacing that machine's ohv alloy 500 single, to produce the P11, P11A and Ranger 750, often badged as Nortons. These machines are addictive, rare, and highly sought-after and highly priced!

Prices

low £6000 || high £8500

ARIEL

Ariel, who built their range of high quality machines in Selly Oak, Birmingham, were a part of the BSA group of companies, and the BSA influence became greater as the years rolled by. Their machines always had a carefully-crafted air of quality, with thoughtful styling and finish. The singles were conventional in design, strong and reliable performers with a solid competition heritage to complement their build quality. There are two twins; the 500, which is an Ariel design, and the 650 which is a lightly redesigned BSA A10. All Ariel machines used Burman gearboxes despite the increasing use of BSA Group components

in other areas, and they have a gloriously pre-war primary chaincase design, complete with a dry clutch running in its own external housing. Gear changes are typically Burman; slow but sure and silent if adjusted properly. The famous fours, with their cylinders arranged in a square and running two crankshafts, are some sort of pinnacle of British engineering, although they can be expensive to restore. The final flourish was the introduction of the Leader/Arrow range of 2-stroke twins, and when these were discontinued in '65, Ariel were no more. We will ignore the Ariel 3... Spares OK (one good specialist dealer, and the entirely excellent Owners' Club), apart from tinware.

In common with most other major manufacturers, Ariel entered the post-war world with a range of mostly rigid machines, but were a little ahead of the mainstream game in that they'd introduced their sprung frame just before WW2 on the Square Four. It was an unusual design, more clever than most. After the war, they offered rigid and springer frames, finally introducing their own excellent swinging arm frame in 1954.

Colt

197cc ohv single || 270lb || 80mpg || 65mph || 1954-60

A SMART LOOKING utility single loosely based on BSA's C11 with added Arielness. A faintly unusual idea, as 250cc was a more popular capacity both for commuters and learner riders. Spares good for the engines; Ariel-specific parts less so.

Prices

low £1500 || high £2500

Leader

247cc 2-stroke twin || 330lb || 55mpg || 70mph || 1958-65

A RADICAL CONCEPT; a wholly enclosed, fully-faired touring motorcycle, with a range of accessories that almost defied description in the '50s. One of the few wholly original designs to emerge from the post-war British industry. Especially recommended to those who still enjoy leisurely lane cruising. The fairing is excellently effective, and the only real downside is the poor braking.

Check that the pressed-steel beam frame is not rotted, especially around the suspension pick-up points. Comfortable and clean.

Prices

low £2200 || high £3200

Arrow

247cc 2-stroke twin || 305lb, 55mpg || 75mph || 1960-5

A STRIPPED-DOWN Leader, built to utilise spare capacity in the Ariel works, the odd-looking Arrow was smooth and fast by the standards of the time, although it was also smoky and underbraked. Also built as the Sports (or 'Golden') Arrow (20hp, 80mph) and finally as the 200 Arrow.

Prices

low £2200 || high £3000

NH (Red Hunter)

347cc ohv single || 365lb || 70mpg || 75mph || 1945-58

A HANDSOME WORKING single in the trad Brit mould. Few special virtues or vices. The unusual Anstey-link plunger models are unusual and interesting; the excellent swinging arm frame handles rather better. The single engines are all developments of a pre-war design, and their ancestry is plain to anyone who observes that their single oil pump is almost identical to that fitted to countless Triumph twins.

Prices

low £2000 || high £3000

VH (Red Hunter)

497cc ohv single || 375lb || 55mpg || 85mph || 1945-58

A VERY SOUND big banger, often with a beautiful maroon finish (like the rest of the 4-stroke range) and great reliability. Rigid models are always great to ride, though some consider the later swinging arm machines to be the best riders and the most oil-tight. HS (scrambles) and HT (trials) comp versions are very highly sought after and highly priced as a result. Ariel's singles are still under-rated, too, and are more affordable than many others, despite their excellence on the road.

Prices

low £2800 || high £4000

VB

598cc sv single || 370lb || 50mpg || 60mph || 1945-58

ONE OF THE last of the sidevalve sloggers (along with BSA's M20 and M21); great reliability, massive charm and almost no performance. Like a lot of sidevalves, they offer an alternative experience to more common ohv singles. If you have a choice, go for the rigid, which boasts considerable character, the swinging arm model rather less so.

Prices

low £2500 || high £4000

KH (Fieldmaster)

498cc ohv twin || 390lb || 65mpg || 90mph || 1948-58

SWEET TOURING TWIN with a unique motor in standard Ariel cycle parts. Engine spares can be hard to find, and the bikes are quite a rare sight these days. The engine is unique to the model, and is unusual in having its pushrods at the outside corners of the block. The 1953-only all alloy KHA is the most rare and will cost more. Available with rigid, Anstey link plunger or swinging arm frames. The all-iron rigid twin is a particular charmer, not unlike Norton's iron twins in the way it rides.

Prices

low £2500 || high £4500

FH (Huntmaster)

648cc ohv twin || 400lb || 55mpg || 100mph || 1954-58

SOLID TOURING 650 twin, with a BSA A10-based engine that retained the tractable, quiet iron cylinder head to its end. Probably the most usable Ariel twin because of the easy availability of engine spares, and upgradeable using any sporting BSA A10 components. A stylish but slightly more expensive alternative to an A10, entirely capable of long-distance two-up travel. However, like other Ariels, the tin bits are scarce. The brakes can be marginal, although they were deemed sufficient for sidecar use in their day.

Prices

low £3000 || high £4500

Square Four

997cc ohv four || 480lb || 45mpg || 100mph

THE FAMOUS BRITISH post-war four is a machine of immense appeal, considerable mechanical noise and great smoothness. Early models are supposedly prone to overheating, and the solo handling can be a little exciting at speed, not least because Ariel never put their swinging arm Four into production and the Anstey link plunger rear end can struggle with the weight and performance. The brakes can also struggle to cope with the speed and mass. For all that, the Squarier is a highly desirable and functional bike with a unique cachet.

Prices

low £11000 || high £16000

BSA

At one time BSA were the largest motorcycle manufacturer in the world, and there are still fleets of the products of their Small Heath, Birmingham factory about. The BSA range was huge, covering all areas of road riding and competition, and was exported to just about everywhere. Many originally exported BSAs have been repatriated over the years, which keeps prices competitive. If you are a newcomer to the old bike world, then a BSA of some description could well be your best bet; they're significantly less expensive than equivalent Triumph and Norton models.

Active Owners Club, many spares suppliers with plenty of repro parts being made. BSA offered a wide range of machines; singles, twins and triples, as well as the once ubiquitous Bantam, probably the most famous small stroker of them all and an inexpensive way to play with straightforward mechanicals.

The BSA way was a path of steady development, and although they built models which were as rapid as any Triumph and handled as well as Nortons, Beezers were never rated so highly. BSA – a big concern which included Triumph – left the 1960s on top of the world, and entered the 1970s on a rapid slide to oblivion. Their dohc 350 twin was stillborn, and the radical new frame designs introduced in 1971 were largely ignored because they used the same old single and twin engines. Be careful when buying bikes from 1971-73; threadforms changed in a strange sequence, so parts which appear perfect for a particular bike might not fit at all. For example; all the unit single engines look similar, which they are, but they are not the same; they changed constantly and sometimes radically through the years. The failure and collapse of BSA is one of the saddest episodes in British industry. Always join the owners' club.



ARIEL RED HUNTER, 1937. Purchased in 1980 as a restoration project. Fully rebuilt then used for three years before being laid up. Dry stored for 30 years so will need recommissioning.

SOLD for £4800

Bantam

174cc 2-stroke single || 230lb || 85mpg || 65mph || 1948-71

THE MOST WIDELY-SOLD of all BSAs, the Bantam (which was the one true learner bike of its day) is apparently immortal, being plentiful even today and having an excellent owners' club of its own. It began life in 1948 as the 123cc D1, grew to 148cc as the D3 in 1954 and to 174cc as the D5 in 1958. The one to look for is possibly the 1968-71 D14/4, which has four gears, smartish styling, good handling and general reliability. The ones to ignore are possibly the plunger-framed versions. All Bantams can be reliable and very economical to run provided that they are built properly. Spares are plentiful and cheap, and modern ignition systems and engine seals can transform them. An easy introduction to classic Brits, if not exactly exhilarating to ride.

Prices

low £1200 || high £2000

C10 (45-57), C11 (45-55), C12 (56-58)

249cc singles || 320lb || 75mpg || 55-65mph

POST-WAR UTILITY bikes, negligible go, stop and handling. Many consider them to be dull, although they provided stolid ride-to-work reliability for many thousands who could afford better than a bicycle. Some spares are hard to find, now, and BSA built these bikes to a price affordable by working class heroes of their day. Less sought-after than Bantams, which is a little mysterious.

Prices

low £1400 || high £2100

C15 Star

249cc ohv single || 320lb || 70mpg || 70mph || 1959-67

REDESIGNED BASIC 250, with neat but restrained streamlined styling and unit construction. Some suffered bottom end and ignition troubles; most just whined on and on, as the basic design was rugged enough. Massive numbers were sold, which meant that even in the 'classic' age they were so plentiful that they were often neglected. Buy with care,

1970s learner riders did terrible things to them. Sports version was the SS80, which was quicker and less reliable. C15T and C15S will cost more. Before paying a lot more for a T or an S, make sure they're genuine.

Prices

low £1450 || high £2250

C25 Barracuda

249cc ohv single || 330lb || 60mpg || 75mph || 1966-70

RESTYLED C15 WITH a bit more go at the expense of some reliability. Better suspension, lighting and braking were added, and they can be surprisingly charming – and quick-steering, as the later frames were increasingly based around those used on the off-road comp models. Became the B25 Starfire in '68. This is a better bet as it is more reliable and less vibratory following a mild de-tuning. Also sold as the Fleetstar for fleet users.

Prices

low £1500 || high £2250

B25SS

249cc ohv single || 320lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1971-72

THE LAST OF the long C15-based series, with a new oil-bearing chassis and smart street scrambler clothes for BSA's final rescue attempt. Naming it the 'Gold Star 250' didn't help sales or credibility. Also called the B25 Victor and rebadged as the Triumph Trailblazer/Blazer SS. As with all 250s, these suffered from learner neglect, so buy carefully. Most spares are around, though quality can be extremely variable. The last are probably the best of all the BSA 250 singles.

Prices

low £1500 || high £2800

B31

348cc ohv single || 365lb || 80mpg || 75mph || 1945-59

TRAD BRIT SINGLE. Often leaky and rattly but can run up very high mileages with very little maintenance. Find an early one with solid or plunger frame for greater agility and charm. They are faster and sweeter than later heavier examples. The 350 engine shared the same bicycle as far

bigger machines, and can be leisurely as a result, especially the swinging arm bikes. The last models, with their coil ignition and alternator electrics, should be worthwhile contenders for anyone who wants to ride regularly.

Prices

low £1800 || high £2800

B32 Gold Star

348cc ohv single || 360lb || 65mpg || 85mph || 1949-57

AMAZING WHAT A name and reputation can do for prices. Souped-up single with a flashy suit and better brakes than lesser models. The DB32 is the one to buy with its excellent duplex frame, although the price is high. Spares availability and quality are excellent, and owners' club support is guaranteed. Check paperwork closely: look on old documents for evidence that it has always been a Goldie and isn't an over-priced replica.

Prices

low £4500 || high £7500

B40

343cc ohv single. 305lb || 80mpg || 75mph || 1960-65

STRETCHED C15, WITH more torque and a cast-in pushrod tunnel to distinguish it. Never wildly popular, they are nonetheless sound and usually reliable if treated kindly. Plenty of ex-WD bikes about. These are better bets, with good off-road type frames, an unusual set of gear ratios and better oil filters included. The sports SS90 version is very rare now.

Prices

low £1750 || high £2400

B44 Victor

441cc ohv single || 335lb || 65mpg || 85mph || 1966-70

ANOTHER C15 STRETCH with more go and more vibration. Engines can be fragile if abused, despite Jeff Smith scrambles heritage. Also sold as the Shooting Star, not to be confused with the twin of the same name.

Prices

low £2200 || high £3000

B33

499cc ohv single || 420lb || 70mpg || 80mph || 1947-59

ENLARGED B31, WITH more torque so longer legs. Possibly the classic '50s workhorse, this one will run and run. Plunger suspension from 1949, then the admirable BSA swinging arm frame arrived in 1955. Alternator/coil ignition in 1958. Similar values for the M33, which is essentially an ohv (B33) engine in a sidevalve (M21) bicycle. All extremely straightforward to maintain and easy to live with: a solid bet for any beginner.

Prices

low £2200 || high £3200

B34, DB34, DBD34, Gold Star

499cc ohv single || 410lb || 55mpg || 110mph || 1950-62

THE LEGEND ITSELF. Fun on the open road, but antisocial and awkward in traffic. Vastly overpriced due to a vast over-reputation, which masks their charm from many newer riders. Rewarding to own and to learn to ride properly. Spares and club support are excellent. Beware of fakes; buy from someone you trust, and always with a warranty. Superb specialist services and updated, uprated components are readily available, mostly intended to boost performance.

Prices

low £12000 || high £20000

B50SS

499cc ohv single || 340lb || 60mpg || 85mph || 1971-72

THE LAST OF the C15 stretches. Striking street-scrambler style fails to disguise the overstressed power train. Also known as the B50 Gold Star and B50T Victor. Conversion to electronic ignition can transform it to one of GB's best ever singles, although starting it is a definite skill, and kickbacks can be killers. The most amazing exhaust system in the world on the US-only Triumph-badged version. Agile and quick, regular oil changes and a fully-charged battery are essential.

Prices

low £2700 || high £4000

M20

496cc sv single || 425lb || 55mpg || 65mph || 1945-55

ONCE UBIQUITOUS ANTIQUATED sidevalve slogger, kept in production by WD contracts and sidecar hauliers like the AA. Little go and little stop but very rugged and oozing character. Stretched to 591cc in 1946 (as the M21, until 1963), with similar performance but greater thirst for both petrol and oil.

Prices

low £2200, high £3500, Military models £5000+

A7

497cc ohv twin || 420lb || 55mpg || 90mph || 1946-61

SPLENDID TWIN, WITH smooth power and typically fine BSA steering. Early models may be more sought after, but post-1950 bikes, with A10-based engines are better for spares. Immense reliability and charm. Recommended to anyone who enjoys motorcycling off the M-ways. Started out as a rigid, gained a redesigned engine and a plunger frame, was later redesigned again to fit into the swinging arm frame. Iron-engined rigids are especially fine. Only fault is the dismal 6V lighting but that's hardly unique to BSA and is fixable with modern components, as is the magneto ignition. A7SS Shooting Star is the sporty one with similar go and a higher price.

Prices

low £2400 || high £3500

A50 Royal Star

499cc ohv twin || 420lb || 60mpg || 90mph || 1962-66

UNIT-CONSTRUCTION

REPLACEMENT for the A7. A fine if slightly sluggish machine with all the style of the 650s but with less go and less vibes. Smoother, though, and the rare sporting versions are highly entertaining. Bargains can be found and they make good working bikes. 12V alternator electrics and seriously simple maintenance make them entirely practical riding machines. The engines shouldn't leak and they shouldn't rattle, but they often do...

Prices

low £2000 || high £3700

A10

646cc ohv twin || 440lb || 55mpg || 105mph || 1951-63

A CLASSIC IN more than just name, the A10 was sold as the Golden Flash with flash style, the Road Rocket with a bit more go, and as the Super Rocket with a little more than that. Many plunger Flashes spent their working lives hauling sidecars and may still lean in that direction. The A10 engine in BSA's swinging arm frame is arguably one of the best postwar Britbikes: robust and easy to ride a long way, if less rapid than the Triumph alternative. The Rocket Gold Star was a super-sports version with Gold Star cycle parts and tuned engine. These can fetch £20,000 but are highly fakeable, so be very careful. An A10 is a fine motorcycle; the only worry can be high-speed braking on the later models. SRM main bearing conversion is a plus when looking to buy.

Prices

low £2700 || high £5000 || RGS low £7500 || high £15000

A65

654cc ohv twin || 425lb || 55mpg || 120mph || 1962-73

THE UNIT-CONSTRUCTION

replacement for the A10. The A65 has a poor reputation as a vibrator and a leaker of oil, which means that they make good buys for riders. Get one while you can! In fact, the single-carb twins are no more rough than any others. Spares are plentiful, if of unusually variable quality. Late (post '71) bikes have the same oil-bearing frames as 71-83 Triumph twins and which provide fine steering. Very late (1972) bikes are very good indeed, and are hard to fault as practical bikes – they even stopped leaking after the '71 redesign. Sold as the Thunderbolt (tourer), Lightning (sports), Spitfire (café racer) and Firebird Scrambler (street scrambler). Problems tend to be electrical and easily fixed. Specialist engineering sorts suspect bottom end oiling, as in all BSA twins.

Prices

low £2500 || high £4500

A70 Lightning

751cc ohv twin || 425lb || 50mpg || 120mph || 1971

US-ONLY HOMOLOGATION



BSA THUNDERBOLT A65T. Barn find 1966 BSA in extremely original condition, with factory paint and chrome. All original fittings – no repro parts. Matching engine and frame number. V5. Engine stripped 30 years ago, untouched since then.

SOLD for £2025

special, intended for Stateside racing. Very rare – beware the imitator! These unusual engines were once popular with heroic chair racers. Spares are hard to find, and they're no faster on the road than the 650.

Prices

High – if you find one.

A75R Rocket 3

740cc ohv triple || 520lb || 35mpg || 125mph || 1968-72

ARGUABLY THE FIRST superbike, the Rocket 3 was quite a sensation when launched, with its vivid acceleration, unconventional styling, high top speed and excellent steering. The bikes are in great demand, and can be expensive to run, although parts supply is good from several expert and specialist suppliers. Rewarding to own and ride, and can accept the disc brake and electric starter from the T160 Trident. Fascinating machines. They share an excellent owners' club with Triumph's Tridents.

Prices

low £6500 || high £10,000

DOUGLAS

The small Bristol manufacturer which always seemed to be in financial difficulty, but which produced some interesting boxer twins with variable production quality. Despite the BMW-like across the frame flat twin design, with the crank's axis in line with the frame's

centreline, Douglas turned the drive through 90-degrees and used a chain final drive rather than a shaft – unlike Velocette's flat twins. Their bikes are relatively rarely offered for sale outside of the owners' club which is the only reliable source of spares.

Mark Series

348cc ohv flat twin || 340lb || 65mpg || 75mph

HARD TO FIND for sale, even harder to find on the road. Fine handling for their day, but a little fragile in the power dept. Once called 'the Bugatti of motorcycles'. The engineering is innovative, with their own take on suspension at both ends, including a truly unusual reliance upon torsion bars. The engines are sweet, smooth and gentle. Avoid the initial (teething troubled) T35 model. The Mk3 Sports is the acknowledged one to have; 80-Plus and 90-Plus sporting versions are faster and boast better brakes for a frighteningly high price.

Prices

low £3500 || high £5500

Dragonfly

348cc ohv flat twin || 395lb || 55mpg || 75mph || 1954-57

ODDLY STYLED TOURING 350 twin, featuring Earles forks and a faired headlamp / petrol tank, as well as conventional rear suspension. An involving, unusual machine with a rev-happy engine providing almost adequate

performance and with excellent steering, but dire brakes and limited specialist support.

Prices
low £3000 || high £5000

FRANCIS-BARNETT

Part of the AMC group, F-B built sturdy and plodding 2-strokes using both the Piatti-designed AMC engine and the better Villiers unit in a variety of capacities and styles. Not at present very highly-regarded by the classic crowd, F-Bs are cheap enough to provide a lot of fun in the old bike milieu, and are reliable if looked after. Models to look out for include the amazingly styled Fulmar, which has a small AMC engine to propel its unusual frame, leading link front forks and swoopy bodywork slowly along, and the Cruiser twins (89 and 91), which have almost acceptable performance. Prices for the whole range are similar and low. Owners Clubs (their own, as well as the British Two-Stroke); scarce spares, apart from for the Villiers engines.

Prices
low £850 || high £1250

GREEVES

Built in Thundersley, Essex, the Greeves range of lightweight, competition-based machines were always a bit different from the more mundane commuter bikes with which they shared the use of Villiers engines. The most striking features are the alloy beam-based frame and leading-link forks which used rubber in torsion as the spring medium. Any bike which could be described as 'off-road' will command a higher price, but the roadster models, using both Villiers singles and twin engines, can provide superb steering, some style and a little performance. Silverstone road-racers are highly coveted by both collectors and riders, while the less than subtle East Coaster is the Ed's personal favourite.

Prices
low £2000 || high £2750

HESKETH

Launched at a wondering world as yet another Great British world-beater, Lord Hesketh's monster V-twin turned out to be an expensive flop, largely because the splendid-looking power unit was inadequately

developed and lacked the sophistication required by those spending around £6000 on a motorcycle. It was also panned by the Press, although at least one of CBG's team likes them. Production of a sort dribbled on for years, including a suggested re-launch using more modern suspension and brakes as well as a bigger version of the original engine. There are still a few low mileage examples about which could make sense, especially if they have been up-dated with the EN10 kit of improved engine parts. Spares supply mostly excellent. The current Hesketh concern is intent upon launching a new range of V-twins using a proprietary powerplant rather than their own.

V1000
992cc dohc V-twin || 560lb || 35mpg || 120mph || 1982-84

ALSO SOLD AS the Vampire with a striking full enclosure, the unfaired V1000 is let down by a noisy engine, a stiff gearchange and a very tall riding position. The rest of the machine is pretty good, using the best parts from European suppliers of the day, and most of the faults can be eliminated with redesigned parts developed by Mick Broom. Many of the criticisms come from those who've never ridden one, and those who ride them usually like them.

Prices
low £10000 || high £14000

JAMES

The other AMC 2-stroke builder, probably most well-known for their Cadet and Captain commuters, which were very dull indeed. Once again, the better buys are those which are powered by Villiers rather than Piatti-designed AMC engines, and the very late (1966) Superswift twin is probably the one to find. Some machines were built with the Villiers 4T unit, which is a little less slow. The James Scooter (which was sold as the Matchless Papoose in the US!) is the one to avoid – unless you truly are a

collector of lost causes. However, a lot of low-cost, high-amusement riding can be had from any of the James range, and they can't depreciate much. Like most British 2-strokes, they have a dedicated band of expert fans.

Prices
low £850 || high £1500

MATCHLESS

The once-famous marque was offered a new lease of life from a new home in Newton Abbot in Devon. Only one model was offered; a Rotax-engined 500cc single, either with or without electric start, and with a second front brake disc to handle the power of the electric start (a joke). The frame, designed by Triumph engineer Brian Jones, is oil-bearing, light and neat. Many spares are available from either the company (LF Harris) or from Rotax. The G80 suffered from over-pricing, sadly, and didn't do well.

G80
499cc ohc single || 390lb || 55mpg || 95mph || 1987-90

EARLY STARTING AND finish problems would appear to have been overcome on the later bikes, and the G80 makes a pleasant, practical, comfortable classic styled bike for everyday use. If you have a choice, opt for the electric start and twin front discs and accept that you'll pay more for one of those.

Prices
low £2000 || high £4000

NORTON

An AMC company from 1953, Norton moved from their Birmingham base to the London AMC works in 1963 as part of the parent company's struggle to stay afloat. They built a wide range of machines including sidevalve sloggers, ohc singles and ohv twins. Famously better roadholding than the Triumph competition although many riders prefer the Triumph's perky power delivery: always more expensive than BSA, AJS

SOLD AS SEEN



TRIUMPH TR5T ADVENTURER / TROPHY TRAIL, 1974. Unrestored original condition, last used in 1974, put in dry storage since. Matching engine and frame numbers. 375 genuine miles from new, all original paint.
SOLD for £8500

or Matchless equivalents. Following the AMC crash of '66, the new Norton Villiers concern concentrated on twins, launching the Commando in 1967 and relying on variants on this theme until production ceased in 1977. A revived successor company produced several hundred twin-rotor Wankel engined machines between 1983 and 1992, which have become accepted as classics despite their strangeness. The modern range of 961 Commandos is still current, so not considered here, yet. Spares supply is excellent for the classic twins, reasonable for the singles; likewise for the rotaries despite the demise of the factory. An excellent owners' club, who supply an increasing range of obscure spares.

Jubilee

249cc ohv twin ■ 350lb ■ 75mpg ■ 65mph ■ 1958-66

WELL-DESIGNED but underdeveloped and sometimes poorly assembled unit construction twin engine in AMC group lightweight chassis. Suffered from oil leaks, mechanical disasters and the Wipac electrical bits. Deluxe version looks smart if you like skirts. The James-style forks and wheels deny cred from an otherwise interesting machine. The unit construction lightweight twin engine is in intriguing design; easy to work on, and should be robust, with its huge main and big end bearings. Oddly, its reputation is less than that.

Prices

low £1700 ■ high £2300

Navigator

349cc ohv twin ■ 350lb ■ 65mpg ■ 75mph ■ 1960-65

ENLARGED AND MORE useful Jubilee with Roadholder forks and an 8" front brake. Enough performance for cruising the byways and excellent handling. Expensive (for a lightweight) but wieldy and manageable. Handsome too, in a baby-Dommi way, and quick enough, if not fast.

Prices

low £2000 ■ high £3250

Electra

394cc ohv twin ■ 360lb ■ 55mpg ■ 75mph ■ 1963-65

RARE ELECTRIC START version of the Navigator with a few more ccs and indicators. The best of the lightweights and pretty civilised for 1963. Provided the electrical system's in decent condition, the starter is reliable enough too. Light and agile, with great steering and stopping. It even has indicators.

Prices

low £2500 ■ high £4500

Model 50

348cc ohv single ■ 400lb ■ 75mpg ■ 75mph ■ 1956-63

GENTLE TRAD BRIT single with nice manners and gentle performance. Post '59 models are the most expensive, with the famous featherbed frame, decent lights and good looks, but the earlier non-featherbed machines are charming, much cheaper and have a better riding position. Very few survive, most were turned into Tritons...

Prices

low £2500 ■ high £4500

Model 40

349c ohc single ■ 340lb ■ 65mpg ■ 85mph. 1946-58

FUSSY CAMSHAFT SINGLE, aka the International, a distant roadgoing relative of the racing Manx models. Featherbed bikes are best, but ludicrously expensive. Experts are out there; identifying them is rarely easy. Parts are available, but are never wallet-friendly.

Prices

low £20000 ■ high £30000

16H

490cc sv single ■ 365lb ■ 55mpg ■ 65mph ■ 1945-55

MOST UN-NORTON-LIKE slogger with less performance than a modern 125. They do have much charm though, and some riders prefer them to BSA's equivalent M20, which was also a favourite with WW2 soldier DRs. Used to be found with chair attached and completely worn out, now usually observed at military revivalist meetings.

Prices

low £2450 ■ high £4000



1941 MATCHLESS G3L frame & forks with a modified AJS 16M engine. Polished lightened balanced crank, high compression piston, ported head with large inlet valve and an Amal GP carb. This is not a concours winning machine.

SOLD for £2000

Model 18 / ES2

490cc ohv single ■ 380lb ■ 60mpg ■ 75mph ■ 1947-62

NORTON'S TRAD BRIT single. An average performer in all areas until the featherbed frame gave it brilliant handling for 1959. Again, it's a pleasant bike, but a lot of the late ones were converted into Tritons. Opinion suggests that they are one of the best British singles. The Model 18 (1945-54) is essentially the plunger ES2 less the plungers; ie. it retained the earlier rigid frame but used the Roadholder front end.

Prices

low £3200 ■ high £4800

ES2 Mk2 & Model 50 Mk2.

964-66

MATCHLESS MACHINES WITH Norton badges and bearing no resemblance to 'real' ES2s. Built for some odd marketing reason for a short time prior to the AMC collapse. Very rare now; price as AJS 350/500, plus invisible rarity factor.

Model 7

497cc ohv twin ■ 413lb ■ 60mpg ■ 90mph ■ 1948-52

AN UNUSUAL NORTON twin, with a gentle iron-head version of the Dominator twin engine in a plunger bicycle similar to that of the ES2. Handling nowhere near featherbed class, but an interesting and comfortable machine.

Debatable whether it's really worth any more than the equivalent BSA A7, but always priced higher.

Prices

low £3000 ■ high £4500

88

497cc ohv twin ■ 420lb ■ 60mpg ■ 90mph ■ 1951-66

THE FIRST FEATHERBED-FRAMED roadster twin and a fine motorcycle. Brilliant steering, excellent brakes and smooth (if a little noisy) motor make for a good time. Frame layout can produce leg-ache after a long run. Also available as the 88SS, which had twin carbs, a siamesed exhaust and was quite quick.

Prices

low £5000 ■ high £7500

Model 30 (International)

490cc ohc single ■ 360lb ■ 60mpg ■ 95mph ■ 1946-58

CAMMY SPORTS SINGLE which offered similar performance to the 88 twin but required much more effort to achieve it. Good looks, class and oil leaks fail to justify the incredible prices. Camshaft kudos is invaluable, however.

Prices

low £14500 ■ high £25000

Model 19

596cc ohv single ■ 385lb ■ 60mpg ■ 70mph ■ 1955-57

MONSTER 600 SINGLE for the

SOLD AS SEEN



1968 VELOCETTE THRUXTON, unrestored, matching numbers, V5C. Original engine, frame & gearbox. Dry stored for 30 years. Engine turns OK with no strange noises. Gearbox selects OK. V5C registration document.
SOLD for £17,100

chair pullers with little to commend it except rarity. Suffix 'S' stands for Sprung (not Sports, silly) and 'R' for Rigid. Very long stroke engine makes it a master at climbing mountains as well as hard to start.

Prices
low £3000 || high £3700

Big 4
596cc sv single || 400lb || 50mpg || 65mph || 1947-54

PRE-WAR RELIC intended to haul vast loads great distances very slowly. Overpriced by the name on the tank. Rare spares.

Prices
low £3000 || high £4500

Model 77
RARE TWIN; BASICALLY a 99 engine in a non-featherbed swinging arm bicycle very similar to the same-year ES2. Comfortable, calm bike to ride, and intended mainly for sidecar use. US riders could buy the Nomad, a desert sled version of this machine with great styling and better performance.

Prices
low £3500 || high £4500
(Nomad a lot more)

99
596cc ohv twin || 420lb || 55mpg || 100mph || 1956-62

STRETCHED 88 WITH a little more speed and vibration. One of

the best of the entire Dominator series. Shared the same cycle parts as the other featherbed twins and developed with them. Single carb, gained an alternator in 1958 and the slimmer slimline featherbed in 1959.

Prices
low £5500 || high £7500

650SS / Mercury
646cc ohv twin || 420lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1960-69

STRETCHED 99 WITH better performance, greater vibration and the slimline featherbed chassis. Very fast but harsh with it. The final featherbed twin was the Mercury, built alongside the Commando until 1969 with a single carb, light mudguarding and no tachometer. Possibly the most pleasant featherbed twin.

Prices
low £5000 || high £6500

Atlas
745cc ohv twin || 420lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1963-68

STRETCHED 650 WITH no more go but plenty of vibes. Huge amount of torque makes for a very relaxed cruiser, but vibration spoils the thrill of the acceleration. Still a good bike, and rewarding to ride, although much overshadowed by the Commando in the classic era.

Prices
low £5000 || high £6500

N15

745cc ohv twin || 420lb || 45mpg || 110mph || 1964-68

NORTON ATLAS ENGINE in a Matchless chassis and off-road clothes makes for a wild early trail bike. Mainly sold in the US as 'desert sleds'. Loads of noise, vibes, excitement. Strangely, the Atlas engine shakes rather less in the Matchless's lugged frame than in Norton's all-welded featherbed.

Prices
low £5500 || high £7500

P11/P11A / Ranger 750
745cc ohv twin || 400lb || 45mpg || 110mph || 1965-69

DEFINITIVE US DESERT racer, with the Atlas lump in Matchless G85 CS scrambler cycle parts making a beast of a bike. Very rare and very fine street scrambler.

Prices
low £7000 || high £9000

Commando
745cc ohv twin || 450lb || 55mpg || 125mph || 1968-73
828cc ohv twin || 450lb || 50mpg || 120mph || 1973-77

THE LAST STRETCH of the Dominator engine. The increasing vibration was tamed by the Isolastic rubber frame mounts, at the expense of some steering precision. Early versions used what was basically an Atlas engine; the 850 was much more refined, less prone to oil loss and less rapid. Sold as Fastback (with unusual styling), Fastback LR (bigger tank), Roadster (small tank), 'S' (high pipes and small tank), HiRider (bizarre custom thing), Interstate (vast tanked tourer), John Player Special (fake racer) and as a real proddie racer. 1975 brought us the Mk3, complete with a single disc brake at each end and an electric start. This was the butt of much humour at the time, but modern replacement starter motors cure it. Possibly the best Brit twin, certainly a genuine British superbike, with all the charm of the big engine without the vibration. Spares supply is excellent: endless opportunities to upgrade engine and ancillaries. Superb owners' club.

Prices

low £4500 || high £8500

Classic

588cc twin rotary || 498lb || 40mpg || 110mph || 1988-89

THE FIRST CIVILIAN rotary Norton. Neat traditional style and unique performance. One hundred and one built and sold. Check that it really is a Classic and not a re-upholstered police Interpol 2.

Prices
low £7000 || high £11000

Interpol 2

588cc twin rotary || 498lb || 40mpg || 110mph || 1983-88

THE MOST COMMON of the rotary series. Built for police and fleet use, the spine frame and ultra-smooth rotary engine, allied to a BMW RT-style fairing, fully enclosed drive chain and hard Craven-type panniers produced an excellent touring machine. All rotaries depend on informed maintenance. Modern ignition systems and lubricants liberate them from their early unreliability. Marzocchi forks and Brembo brakes add to the riding pleasure. Buy with care, or budget for a specialist rebuild before use.

Prices
low £4000 || high £5500

Commander

588cc l/c twin rotary || 498lb || 40mpg || 110mph || 1988-93

NORTON REPLACED THE air-cooled Interpol 2 with the more refined liquid-cooled Commander. Built in parallel for fleet / police use and the civilian market, it replaced the Italian components of the IP2 with running gear from Yamaha's XJ900. Excellent fairing, and twin batteries to provide confidence for private users as well as major electricals for the police. Early machines offered only non-removable hard panniers, while the last ones were fitted with detachable Krauser items. Buy with care; rotary engines respond badly to neglect but are fast and reliable when properly set up.

Prices
low £5000 || high £7500

F1
588cc twin rotary ■ 162kg ■
32mpg ■ 135mph, 1990-92

If you want to preserve for posterity, buy an original F1, if you want to ride a bike, buy the later F1 Sport. Water-cooled rotormotor with Yamaha gearbox in exotic alloy beam chassis and staggering styling. Overheated in traffic, but brilliant to ride. Superb handling and considerable rapidity. Buy a bike only with a known history and preferably a service record.

Prices
low £14000 ■ high £18000

PANTHER

Built by Phelon and Moore in Cleckheaton, Yorkshire, Panther motorcycles inspire huge loyalty in their owners and seem to spur them on to incredible feats. As well as the galaxy-spanning big slopers, P&M built a range of lighter 4-stroke singles and a range of 2-stroke lightweights powered by the ubiquitous Villiers engines and featuring Earles forks. They also imported the Terrot scooter in a vain tilt at the scooter market. Panthers have little performance but great charm. Active and completely eccentric Owners Club. Spares OK.

Models 65/75
248/348cc ohv singles ■
340/350lb ■ 75/65mpg ■
63/72mph ■ 1947-62

A PAIR OF very traditional British singles with a pedigree dating back to Boadicea at least. Rugged, simple, immortal and distinctly non-sporting, they were equipped with about the best tele-forks to have been made in Britain; Dowty's 'Oleomatic' (pump-up, air-sprung) units. Worth a ride for these alone.

Prices
low £1750 ■ high £2500

Model 100
598cc ohv single ■ 440lb ■ 60mpg ■ 75mph ■ 1946-63

INTENDED AS A chairpuller, and looking quite odd without one, they have immense reliability, leak hugely and run on for years. Built

for durability rather than looks. Supremely charming to own. One of Brit biking's great characters.

Prices
low £3000 ■ high £5000

Model 120
646cc ohv single ■ 440lb ■ 55mpg ■ 80mph ■ 1959-65

ENLARGED BUT LITTLE different. 'Notably more troubled than the Model 100' said noted historian Steve Wilson. Some spares are very rare, but the owners' club can usually help.

Prices
low £2800 ■ high £4000

ROYAL ENFIELD

From their Redditch works, RE built a respectable range of staid singles and twins which were at one time mostly famous for their inability to retain their oil. They listed two ranges of singles, one based on the Bullet and the other on the unit-construction Crusader. There was also a rather nice Villiers powered 250, the Turbo Twin, which is very rare. The twins came in 500, 700 and 750 capacities, arguably the best of which were the late Interceptors, which have Norton forks and front wheel and go as well as they look. All heavy models used the Albion gearbox, which was out-dated by 1956 and can be slow through the gears with an odd neutral-finder lever to play with. Spares for most models are very good, with much interchange between Brit-built Bullets and their Indian descendants.

Clipper
248cc ohv single ■ 350lb ■ 85mpg ■ 60mph ■ 1953-57

GENTLE AND RARE. Even rose-tinted retro-vision doesn't help much with the performance.

Prices
low £1750 ■ high £2200

Crusader
248cc ohv single ■ 330lb ■ 75mpg ■ 75mph ■ 1956-66

UNIT CONSTRUCTION SINGLE with good handling and oil leaks. Also offered with a 5-speed gearbox (the Super 5) which had something of a reputation for unreliability.

Prices
low £1750 ■ high £2500

Continental
248cc ohv single ■ 320lb ■ 65mpg ■ 80mph ■ 1962-67

RESTYLED VERSION OF the 5-speed Crusader, with more waft, vibration and oil leaks. Odd semi-racer styling on the GT model.

Prices
low £2200 ■ high, £3000

Bullet
346cc ohv single ■ 365lb ■ 70mpg ■ 70mph ■ 1949-63

ENFIELD'S RATHER UNDER-RATED version of the trad Brit single, distinguished by intriguing detail design. Less common 500 version with more torque is perhaps

a better machine, but both steer extremely well. British-built Bullets much more valued than Indian ones.

Prices
low £2000 ■ high £4000

Meteor Minor
496cc ohv twin ■ 420lb ■ 60mpg ■

85mph ■ 1959-63

DEVELOPED FROM THE rare '500 Twin', the small RE twin is a much under-rated machine which goes and handles very well, although some spares can be elusive.

Prices
low £2500 ■ high £3200

Bullet / Electra / Continental
499cc ohv single ■ 390lb ■ 80mpg ■ 80mph ■ 1955-present

PRODUCTION OF BULLETS continued in Chennai, India, long after it ended in Blighty. Quality dubious until mid-1990s, incremental improvements since then. Official UK bikes always built to a better standard than grey imports. Electra-X came with lean-burn engine and five-speed gearbox. Fuel-injection and unit construction from 2007. Latest version boosted to 535cc for café racer Continental GT model. Heaps of choice, great value, excellent spares supply and enthusiast suppliers.

Prices
low £1500 ■ high £3000

Super Meteor
692cc ohv twin. 430lb ■ 55mpg ■ 100mph ■ 1952-60

ANOTHER UNDER-RATED twin, with good manners and excellent ➔



1971 NORTON COMMANDO ROADSTER. 1250 miles. As brand new, stunning. A credit to Norvil who restored and built this machine with true care and expertise. Far better than any factory built bike I am sure. Cost £18,000 plus to have it made
SOLD for £8600

rideability. Very good tourer. Developed into the Constellation for 1959, with better styling, better handling, less reliability and 110mph || Try one and be (pleasantly) surprised.

Prices
low £2500 || high £3500

Constellation/Interceptor Mk 1
692/736cc ohv twin || 435lb || 110mph || 1958-68

A RACE-BRED SPORTS
development of the Super Meteor. Very fast but earned a deserved reputation for fragility and external lubrication. The later and larger Interceptor Mk 1 was a little better.

Prices
low £3000 || high £4500

Interceptor Mk2
736cc ohv twin. 442lb, 112mph, 1968-70

A SERIOUS CONTENDER for Britain's best-ever big (parallel) twin. A super redesign of the old engine lifted it into the near-bulletproof bracket. Crushingely handsome good looks, good handling and an immense power spread, no oil leaks. Norton forks and front brake are very effective, and the only let-down is the gearbox, which has a chasm between 3rd and top. The Rickman-framed offspring is sheer magic, but it was all too late to stop RE from going under.

Prices
low £4000 || high £7500

SCOTT

Made post-war in Birmingham by the Aero Jig and Tool Company, who took over production from the Shipley factory and compromised the long-established specification with sophistication that just seemed to add weight. An intriguing mix of old and almost modern with sweet manners if you're not in a great hurry. Always remember that all Scott engines are 2-stroke twins and are not like any other engine you'll have encountered before. Only ever

buy one from someone you trust and who knows what they're selling. Fascinating machines, with ingenious solutions to problems you didn't know existed.

Squirrel
596cc 2-str. twin || 400lb || 50mpg || 80mph || 1947-mid 60s

QUIRKY, TORQUEY, AND for the individualist only. Unique. Absorbing to own and rewarding to ride.

Prices
low £4500 || high £6500

SUNBEAM

The Sunbeam name was acquired by BSA (from AMC) during WW2 and was relaunched in '46 as an upmarket tourer. Sadly, the S7/S8 series machines were never fully developed and sales were disappointing. Most wearing spares available from one major and expert source. Clever engineering, well made and a true alternative to all other British 500cc parallel twins.

S7/S8
490cc ohc in-line twin || 490lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1946-57

INTENDED AS THE ideal touring motorcycle, with a rubber mounted, unit construction, understressed power unit, driving via a shaft. Comfortable and handsome but the S7 was let down by sluggish performance and ponderous handling. The S8 looked slimmer, with its BSA front forks and brake, and steered a little better. Something of an heroic failure. Always worth consideration if style is more important than speed.

Prices
low £3600 || high £5000

TRIUMPH

These chaps started the British obsession with parallel twins just before the 1939-45 war and kept them in production until 1988 (latterly at the LF Harris works in Devon), before John Bloor began again at

Hinckley. The excellent availability of spares for most of the post-war models makes them very popular with riders in the classic world, and they are indeed very practical and plentiful bikes. Huge numbers of US-spec Bonnies and Tridents have come back from the States, along with quantities of NOS spares. Triumphs are often mechanically noisy, and with less than perfect steering on the '50s and early-'60s twins. Triumph also built some oddly pleasant scooters – they're really alternative! Spares supply is ample (but quality variable); the owners' club is active and enthusiastic, and both twins and triples have benefitted greatly from modern re-engineered components. If you absolutely must have a Triumph then you'll happily pay the price premium which the badge commands: but if you started here simply because it's a familiar name then go look at BSAs for a softer entry to classic Brits. Early Hinckley Triumphs have achieved 'classic' status already: look out for them in a future issue.

Tiger Cub
199cc ohv single || 230lb || 85mpg || 65mph

DEVELOPED FROM THE earlier 150cc Terrier, the Tiger Cub was a great learner bike of its day. Sold in off-road form as well as roadster, many have also been converted for use in pre-65 trials. Some suffered from weird wiring and weak brakes and big end. The late ones are best, with the BSA Bantam rolling chassis. Massively popular, and priced way beyond their performance.

Prices
low £2000 || high £5000

TR25, Blazer SS
249cc ohv single || 320lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1971-72

A NEAT STREET scrambler based around the BSA B25, which is identical bar the styling and badges. Don't be put off by their poor reputation; used sensibly, with frequent oil changes, they can be fun and practical to ride. Triumphs appear to fetch higher prices than BSA, oddly. The oil-bearing frame is

excellent; two different front brakes were used, both can be made to work well. Earlier TR25W Trophy is as uninspired as the BSA Starfire, which it really is.

Prices
low £1750 || high £2500

3TA
348cc ohv twin || 360lb || 70mpg || 80mph || 1957-68

ALSO CALLED THE 21 (21 cu in = 350cc), this was the first unit-construction Triumph || Bizarre 'bathtub' rear end styling makes them stand out; odd handling, feeble brakes and occasional sparks make you wonder why they sold so well. Sporty version was the Tiger 90, which was nicer and lasted a year longer.

Prices
low £2750 || high £3650

5T Speed Twin
498cc ohv twin || 375lb || 65mpg || 90mph || 1946-57

EARLY POST-WAR models have weak forks and brakes, copious leaks, rattles and poor roadholding. No wonder they sold well! Avoid anything with a sprung hub if you enjoy riding rapidly. Engine is sweet and willing, however, and just a few miles will reveal the reason for the enduring popularity of Triumph's twins.

Prices
low £3500 || high £5000

Tiger 100
498cc ohv twin || 370lb || 60mpg || 100mph || 1946-57

SPORTS VERSION OF the 5T, with same comments and more performance. The all alloy engine is a rattler, but is a mover – it's a shame so many ended up in Tritons and Tribsas. Riding an early s/arm model can be (a little too) exciting, though the off-road models are simply superb.

Prices
low £4000, high £5800

5TA
498cc ohv twin || 385lb || 50mpg || 85mph || 1958-66

UNIT CONSTRUCTION REPLACEMENT for the 5T, with

'bathtub' rear enclosure, puny frame and a monster front mudguard. Crisp engine, interesting handling at speed. The engine is faster than the frame; excitement guaranteed. The T100A was the first unit Tiger 100; looked more like a motorcycle, and lasted until '61. It was followed by the T100SS (1962-65), the T100 (1966), took a great leap forward to become the T100S (1967-70) and the T100T (1967-70) with a quicker motor. This became the T100C (1971-72) and finally the T100R Daytona (1971-73). Later models are usually better. Original bathtub enclosures are now very hard to find (riders of the time did the wise thing and binned them) although remanufactured items surface every so often. Practical fun bikes.

Prices
low £2500 || high £4500

TR5T Adventurer
498cc ohv twin || 330lb || 50mpg || 80mph || 1973-74

TRIUMPH 500 TWIN engine in oil-bearing 250 single scrambler cycle parts. Fairly rare, undergeared but handsome, popular and frisky. One of the most peculiar exhausts ever and unique instruments!

Prices
low £4500 || high £6000

TRW
498cc sv twin || 375lb || 65mpg || 70mph || 1948-65

QUIETLY CHARMING MILITARY machine; delightful if leisurely. Rigid rear end and sprung saddle provides 'vintage' feel, with added benefit of reasonable brakes. Many parts interchangeable with Trophy trials model, so many were converted. Many were civilianised after being demobbed; modern ironies find numerous examples now converted back to military trim.

Prices
low £3400 || high £5000

6T Thunderbird
649cc ohv twin || 400lb || 60mpg || 95mph || 1950-61

BIG, SOFT AND smoothish tourer with customary Triumph plus and minus points. Sports version was

the Tiger 110 ('54-'61), which was faster without too much vibration. The iron-head 650 with a sprung hub frame is viewed by some as the best of all Triumphs, and they are excellent riding machines.

Prices
low £4500 || high £5700

TR6 Trophy
649cc ohv twin || 400lb || 55mpg || 105mph || 1954-73

AMERICAN-ORIGINATED SEMI off-roader which through the years evolved for the UK as a roadster replacement for the Thunderbird, with more stability and similar performance. Bonneville improvements usually ended up on the Trophies too, and many consider the single-carb engines to be sweeter than the twin-carb Bonnies. Engine prefix TR6P denotes an ex-police bike. The Thunderbird name was used for the late (1981-83) short-stroke TR65; an excellently revvy rider's machine but fairly unusual.

Prices
low £4000 || high £6000

Tiger 110
649cc ohv twin || 420lb || 60mpg || 109mph || 1953-61

SPORTING UPGRADE OF the 6T, and an entirely pleasant machine to ride, the T110 was intended to be the fast 650 demanded by the Americans, who bought boatloads of them. Eclipsed by the arrival of the T120 Bonneville in 1959, the T110 was phased out soon after. The last year, 1961, was a particularly fine machine.

Prices
low £4500 || high £5700

T120 Bonneville
649cc ohv twin || 400lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1959-62

SUPER-SPORTS PRE-UNIT 650; always a favourite among the café racers, with lots of power, noise, shakes and wild handling at speed. A cracker, but beware fake lash-ups at high prices. The Bonneville name adds a load to the price, but if you must have one...

Prices
low £7000 || high £12000



1954 BSA M33, 500CC. New piston and cylinder honed. Big end rebuild/refurb. Gearbox rebuilt with all new bearings, bushes and shims. Rebuilt oil pump, Amal carb. New harness. Professionally rebuilt dynamo. All new brakes, new rims and tyres.
SOLD for £3100

T120 Bonneville
649cc ohv twin || 410lb || 50mpg || 115mph || 1963-74

THE UNIT BONNIE. The most famous British twin of them all; hugely well documented development history fills many books (buy one!). 1966-70 bikes fetch the highest prices and are arguably the best of a good bunch. 1971-74 oily-framed 5-speeders (T120V) are the safest, with a disc as well as the fifth gear, and they are easily the cheapest.

Prices
low £3000 || high £12000

T150 / T160 Trident
740cc ohv triple || 503lb || 37mpg || 120mph || 1968-75

FAST AND EXCITING, with excellent steering. The disc-braked versions stop well, and the electric start T160 is a very fine all-rounder indeed. A little more money, reliability and further development could have kept it in production for several more years, and had the T180 Thunderbird III made it into production it should have sold well. Everyone should have one, at least once. Good spares supply; several specialists have continued development and improved reliability, but they still require dedicated owner input.

Prices
low £5800 || high £7500

T140 Bonneville 750
744cc ohv twin || 440lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1973-88

A SYMBOL OF the dark days of industrial unrest at Triumph's Meriden, Coventry works, the Bonnie somehow weathered the storm and remained available. It sold on character alone, and was kept in production after the final demise of the Triumph Engineering Co by LF Harris, finally being withdrawn in '88 to make way for his new Matchless G80 model. First T140s were actually 725cc, but those are rare now. UK versions suffered from some dire styling, while the US versions always looked a lot better. Early models are usually faster, though as the years passed and development resources shrank, the big battle was to maintain compliance with US emissions standards. This effectively reduced the performance to keep down the noise. Late machines are arguably the best, with some very attractive limited edition models, and with a usually effective electric start taking the strain. The Bing carbs are less desirable, but the US market demanded them, and it's easy enough to regain that lost performance. Affordable and reliable, if not as charming as older incarnations. The first and last of the classic Brit twins?

Prices
low £3200 || high £6000

TR7 Tiger 750
SINGLE CARB VERSION of the ➔

Bonnie. Similar performance, less charisma than the T140, but in many ways a preferable machine. Smoother, usually, easier to keep in tune, and a little more frugal, not least because of the single Amal carb. Super-rare bright yellow TR7T Tiger Trail is a gem ... if you can find one.

Prices
low £3200 || high £4500

TSX
A FASCINATING ATTEMPT by Meriden Triumph to produce a 'soft chopper' – a factory custom. Bonneville powerplant and main frame, but with clever styling tweaks and a fat back wheel coupled with many detail changes to produce a striking and unusual machine. Few sold, so rare and overpriced.

Prices
low £5000 || high £7500

TSS
744cc ohv twin || 420lb || 45mpg || 120mph || 1982-83

A BONNIE WITH an 8-valve head. A little more performance and a certain cachet, maybe, but uncertain reliability. The machine should have provided a sporting performance, and was certainly faster than a contemporary T140, but a lack of development resources denied it a decent run. Eight-valves, twin discs, an electric start and subtle styling – as well as rarity – command high prices.

Prices
low £5000, high £7500

VELOCETTE

One of the most individual of English bike builders, Velocette's great post-war hope was the LE flat twin, which was expected to sell in vast numbers as a bike for everyman. It didn't, and the Hall Green factory had continual cash-flow difficulties as a result. Even so, they built some great singles until the money finally ran out in 1971. Enthusiasts provide a wide range of improvements for

the Veloce original, and all the singles command higher prices than most other Brit equivalents.

LE
192cc sv l/c flat twin || 250lb || 100+mpg || 55mph || 1949-71

A TRULY HEROIC (commercial) failure. For years, British motorcyclists had cried out for a water-cooled, silent, sophisticated, shaft-driven bike with built-in legshields. But they didn't buy it, probably because it was too civilised, odd-looking or just gutless. LEs are pleasant little machines with a style of their own, a dedicated following and their own owners' club. The ohv unfaired Valiant roadster was frail but flew.

Prices
low £1650 || high £1950

Vogue
192cc sv l/c flat twin || 330lb || 95mpg || 55mph || 1963-68

AN ATTEMPT AT updating the LE with neat glassfibre bodywork. Very attractive and practical bike, but with less performance than the Ariel Leader. Rare now.

Prices
low £2500 || high £3200

MAC
349cc ohv single || 370lb || 70mpg || 75mph || 1952-60

VELO'S OWN TRAD Brit single is a charming machine with good steering and reliability. An excellent working bike; easy-starting, smooth, nimble and comfortable. Ideal introduction to the marque.

Prices
low £4000 || high £5500

Viper
349cc ohv single || 390lb || 60mpg || 85mph || 1956-69

SWEET 350 SPORTSTER whose roadholding outperforms the engine. Like most trad Brit heavyweight 350s, its bigger brother sold better.

Prices
low £4500 || high £6500

MSS
499cc ohv single || 400lb || 60mpg || 80mph || 1953-68

GENTLE TOURING 500. The last of a breed, with good steering, comfort and reliability; plus the traditional separate gearbox, Miller electrics and strange clutch. Probably the easiest of the Velo singles to live with, boasting good main road performance, fine handling and always adequate braking.

Prices
low £4000 || high £6000

Venom
499cc ohv single || 400lb || 55mpg || 95mph || 1956-68

SPORTS SINGLE IN the old tradition. Quick, precise steering and high cruising speeds make it a desirable machine. Although out-dated by the 1960s, Velo enthusiasts kept it in production after all its rivals had fallen. Venom Clubman is the most highly prized, highly priced and hard to ride.

Prices
low £5500 || high £8500

Thruxton
499cc ohv single || 390lb || 50mpg || 105mph || 1964-71

LAST OF THE LINE, and priced alongside BSA Gold Stars and Inter Nortons. With which they share the market's stratosphere. Often tough to start, requiring The Knowledge to make them give their best, they are only suited to the truly committed (and wealthy).

Prices
low £7500 || high £12000

VINCENT

Probably the most widely discussed British marque of all

E&OE

There will be errors and there are certainly omissions. Correcting them is likely to be too big a task for the CBG simpletons, so your assistance will always be appreciated. If you want us to add / remove / improve an entry, drop a note to

time, this small builder of high-quality, expensive motorcycles soldiered on with their high performance twins until 1955, when even re-badging NSU tiddlers couldn't save them. Considering their ultra-high value, it is good to see so many on the road. Spares plentiful, if rather expensive. A superb owners' club and riding community ensures their survival and desirability.

Comet
499cc ohv single || 400lb || 60mpg || 85mph || 1948-54

HALF OF THE famous V-twin (half the size, half the appeal, less than half the price), the Comet shares most of its cycle parts with the big twins, which keeps up the cost, but has a Burman gearbox rather than Vincent's own, making it a little less charismatic in the eyes of some. Good to ride, quick and with excellent steering.

Prices
low £15000 || high £20000

1000
998cc ohv V-twin || 460lb || 50mpg || 120mph || 1950-55

SOLD AS A TOURER (Rapide), sportster (Shadow) and fully-enclosed super tourer (Black Prince), the big Vin has a fearful reputation to live up to, and largely succeeds. Genuinely capable of holding their own in the modern motorway world, the big twins attract addicts to their unique engineering and riding experience. Electric starts and other upgrades are now increasingly considered acceptable. Prices are in the stars, and show no sign of falling. Few owners are disappointed, and they can't afford to be.

Prices
low £20000 || high £HUGE...

editor@classicbikeguide.com and we'll credit you for any changes which result. Similarly, if you've recently sold or bought a bike, drop us a pic of it with the price, and we'll use it when there's space ... with anonymity if you prefer! **CBG**

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Est 1966

BSA

BSA PARTS

A7
A7 Shooting Star
A10
A10 Golden Flash
A10 Road Rocket
A10 Super Rocket
A10 Super Flash
A10 Rocket Gold Star
A50
A50R Royal Star
A50C Cyclone
A50W Wasp
A65
A65 Star Twin
A65L Lightning
A65R Rocket
A65T Thunderbolt
A65H Hornet
A65S Spitfire
A65F Firebird Scrambler
B Series
(4 stroke single cylinder) and
(4 stroke twin)
B25 Fleet Star
B25 Starfire
B25 Barracuda
B25 SS Gold Star
BSA B31 single and B31 Twin
B32 Gold Star
B33
B34 Gold Star
B40 350 Star
B40 SS90 (Sports Star 90)
WDB40 (Army B40)
B44
B44 Victor
B44SS Shooting Star
B44R Victor Roadster
B50
B50SS Gold Star 500
D Series
(2-stroke single cylinder. BSA
Bantam)
D1 - D3 - D5
D7 - D10
D14/4
B175
M Series (Side Valve, single cyl)
M20
M21
M33



This is a
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LIGHTENED DISC
for any standard
T140 Bonneville,
T150, T160
Trident

TRIUMPH
SIDE STAND
Covering from
1954 to 1983

TRIUMPH

TRIUMPH PARTS

Trophy 500cc
6T Thunderbird
650cc twin
3TA or "Triumph TwentyOne"
"350 cc (ie 21
cubic inches)
STA 500cc
T90 350cc
T100 500 cc
T100A
T100SS
T100S Tiger Sports
T100R Daytona 500cc
T110 Tiger 650cc
TR5T Adventurer/Trophy Trail
500cc
TR25W Trophy 250 250cc
T100C Trophy 500cc
TR6 Trophy 650cc
Trophy 6C Trophy 650cc
TR7V Tiger 750cc
Tiger Cub 200cc 650cc
Thruxton Bonneville
T140 Bonneville 750cc
T120 Bonneville
T140D Bonneville Special 750cc
T140W TSS 750cc
T140E 750cc
Triumph T140 TSX
Bonneville Executive
Triumph TR65 Thunderbird
650cc
TR7T Tiger Trail 750cc
TR65T Tiger Trail 650cc
T140LE Royal Wedding
Bonneville 750cc
T140J Bonneville Silver Jubilee
750cc
T140AV, TR7AV, TSSAV
TR7VS Tiger Electro
T140ES Bonneville Electro
TR6 Thunderbird 600cc
TSX8
Triples
T150 1969, 1972
T150V 1971, 1974
X75 1973
T160 1975



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Suzuki GT750

Seventies Japanese strokers came in all shapes and sizes but the GT750 is quite probably the most sophisticated offering of the period

WORDS BY STEVE COOPER **IMAGES BY** CHRIS SMITH, KEVIN BUSH, DARRYL PLENTY AND 2WHEELSMIKLOS (MIKE SALMON'S GT750J), AND MORTONS ARCHIVE

● **Above:** There are those who will maintain that the very first of the radical kettles was the best. Others think otherwise. It is an interesting world

1: The first official GT750 was this, the considerably striking GT750J

2: The three cylinders exhaled into three exhaust headers, which were interlinked before splitting into four silencers. Simplicity is a noted virtue of two-strokes

3: The side panel carried a description for the less than expert to marvel at

IN FEBRUARY 1971 Yukio Kuroda reported for *Cycle World* on a brand new Suzuki unlike any other that had been exhibited at the 17th Tokyo International Motor Show.

The new bike featured three water-cooled cylinders, a fan-assisted radiator, a trio of exhaust pipes, a quartet of silencers, a temperature gauge, an electric start, a transistor controlled ignition and an awesome nine-inch diameter four leading shoe front brake.

At the time the sceptics might have wondered if

Kuroda San had acquired some of those psychotropic tablets of the period as the specification was so outlandish. The fact that everything bar the TCI spark unit made it into series production underlines just how seriously refined the show model was. This was a post-prototype machine set out at a prestigious event to showcase exactly what Suzuki was capable of. The company had set out its stall for all to see, and the gloves were off. Here was a motorcycle to out-tech Honda and put upstarts Kawasaki back in their place.



Suzuki GT-750J Le Mans

Length	87.2"
Width	34.0"
Height	44.3"
Wheel Base	52.8"
Ground Clearance	3.9"
Dry Weight	472 lbs.
Engine Type	2-stroke, water-cooled aluminum, 1 cylinder
Bore & Stroke	2.76" x 2.52"
C.C.	735
Compression Ratio	6.5:1
Carburetor	Three VM32
Maximum Output	62 hp/6500 rpm
Acceleration	12.6 sec/0-100 mph
Speed Range	115-120 mph
Transmission	5-speed, constant mesh
Clutch	Multi-plate, wet disc
Starter	Electric
Brake Front	Right hand, internal expanding disc brake, dual parallel
Brake Rear	Right foot, internal expanding disc brake, dual parallel
Suspension Front	Telescopic, oil-damped
Suspension Rear	Swinging arm, oil-damped
Tires Front	5-way adjustable rear shocks
Tires Rear	Double cam, dual point front brakes
Fuel Tank Capacity	3.75-19.4 US gal.
Oil Tank Capacity	4.5 gal.
Instruments	Speedometer/ Tripmeter, Tachometer, Water Temp Gauge

All prices and specifications subject to change without notice.

Suzuki: built to take on the country.
U.S. Suzuki Motor Corporation, Santa Fe Springs, California 90670

The GT750's origins are essentially part and parcel of the legendary T500 twin allied to a desire to be top dog. As we now recognise, Suzuki was extremely proficient at playing variations on a theme. Using common components, the company was able to produce a wide range of motorcycles of varying capacities. To say that the GT750 is just a T500 with an extra pot and a water jacket is an over simplification, but the fact remains that the pistons and rings are interchangeable. The use of water cooling allowed for tighter piston clearances, and this, allied to the sound deadening water jacket, made for a remarkably quiet motor in an era where fin ringing and general engine clatter were the norm. The water jacket would, in theory, allow a greater specific power output, yet Suzuki never overtly sought to exploit this in road-going machines. The use of water-cooling was an end in itself, to prove it could be done and to get one over on the opposition.

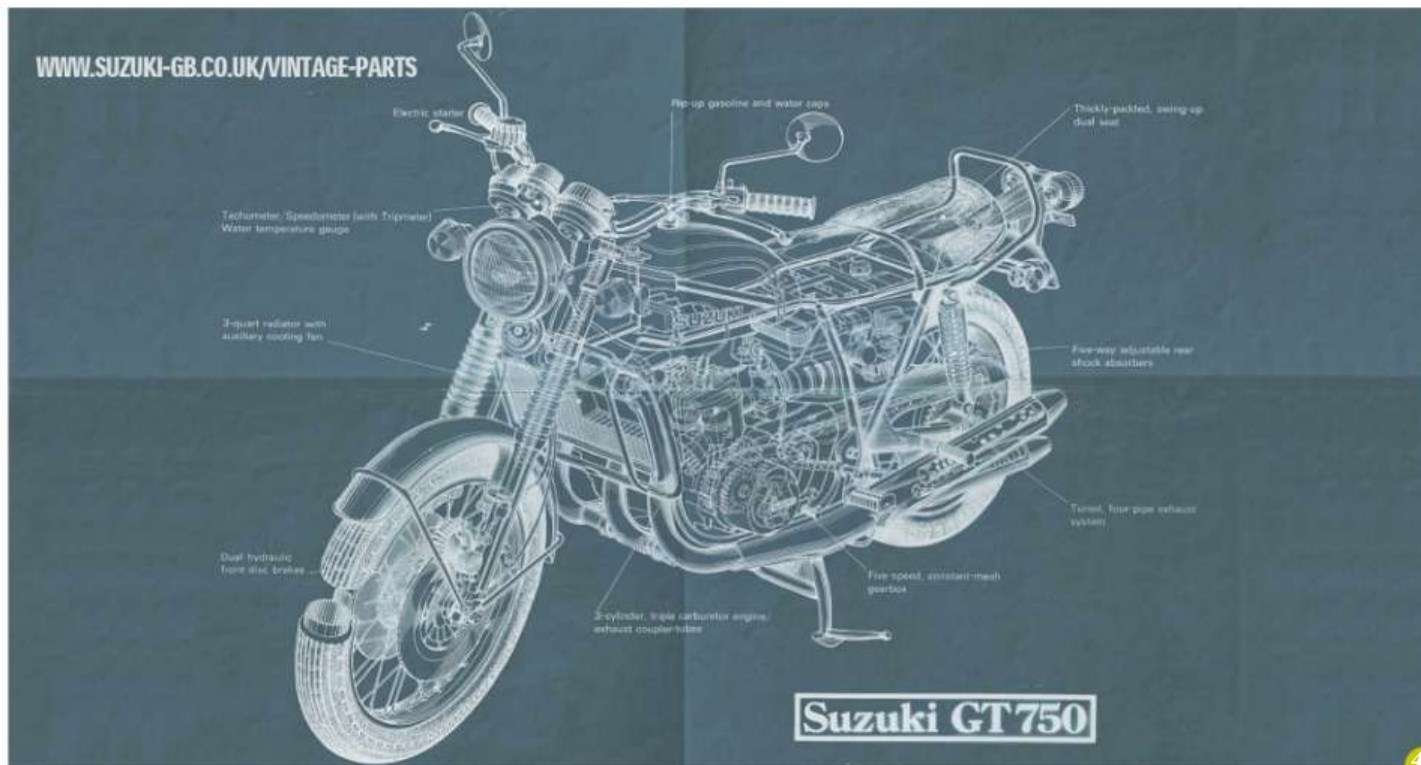
Grander and more ostentatious than Honda's CB750, and larger in capacity than the maverick Kawasaki H1 Mach III, the GT750 was intended to be the ultimate status machine of the period. Unfortunately, the reality is a little different. The bike's all-up mass meant that it was never going to be the ultimate speed machine. Kawasaki stole that

honour and then upped the ante by launching the Z1 at the end of the same year the big triple went on sale – the Z1 actually weighs less than the GT750! And then circumstances really delivered the *coup de grace* for the bike as environmental pressures saw large capacity two-strokes almost outlawed.

If all that sounds negative then it shouldn't, but that is the reality of the situation as it was at the time. However, the GT750 remains one of the most popular, desirable and accessible superbikes of the period. Even better, it's not so badly afflicted by the better-than-money-in-the-bank culture that's currently prevalent in the market.

The GT750 offers a truly unique riding experience with a super-smooth engine, lashings of creamy torque, an exhaust note like nothing else and an





4: What it was, where it all went, and how it worked

5: Although the K model received a set of new brakes, the characteristic silencers stayed much as before

6: With commendable logic, Suzuki followed up its J model with the K model. More excellent colour schemes and an attempt at a more beefy front brake

unbeatable street presence. From the off the machine was billed as a GT, a Grand Tourer, and that was always its purpose.

If the press and public expected the fastest machine of its ilk, that was their mistake, not Suzuki's. If you've ever ridden a T500 then you'll know exactly what the designers were aiming for; more of the same but on a grander and more impressive scale. And with that as a target, Suzuki scored a perfect bullseye. The bike in its various model iterations never really strayed much beyond the original design brief and remained

the archetypal do everything, commute, tour, large capacity motorcycle. Arguably, Suzuki's engineers and product placement teams were never allowed to grow the design on and optimise its potential.

Handling was always a little on the ponderous, heavy side and the engine was certainly capable of much more than it delivered in its standard form. Period upgrades using Nico Bakker or Sanders & Lewis frames certainly unleashed a huge amount of latent potential. The engine was capable of taking a very heavy tune, as demonstrated by the infamous Flexi-Flyer that nearly did for an up and coming Barry Sheene at Daytona. Decades on, Gene Davis and Larrie Schneider, running Ocelot Racing out of Madison, Wisconsin, tuned and upgraded the motors, eventually coming up with an 850cc engine that delivered a substantial 130bhp.

Back in the day reed valves and direct fuel injection, allied to a lighter, stronger chassis would have substantially enhanced the marketability of the GT750, and the technology genuinely existed at the time. Yamaha's prototype GL750 water-cooled, two-stroke four, ran fuel injection borrowed from a jet ski.

The first official GT750J of 1972 was very close





7: 1974 saw the next revision, logically labelled at the GT750L. Observe that the exhaust's silencers have changed, the forks have lost their gaiters and the side panels are different

8: Much chrome offered endless polishing opportunities, while the electrics were as dependable as Japanese electrics generally are

9: Typically easy to read instruments paired with completely logical switchgear to provide a Seventies perspective on the performance

10: This is one remarkable engine. Unique and always exciting

11: After the original black-capped silencers came these less striking but efficient devices. This bike still has the earlier coupled headers, which Suzuki used up until they ran out, apparently



to the 1971 Tokyo Show machine, but minus the TCI sparks system. Running rubber fork gaiters, the front end had a decidedly old world look to it, enhanced by the 4LS front brake that barely coped with the bike's mass.

Available in Candy Yellow Ochre, Candy Jackal Blue (turquoise to anyone else) or Candy Lavender, the bike immediately stood out from the crowd with its contrasting white vinyl decals. The vast majority of UK bikes seem to have been Candy Jackal Blue as the gold wasn't offered here and most riders steered well clear of what they perceived as a pink bike. Ironically, today it's the colour most people want. The unique three-into-four exhaust system with black end cans and its characteristic note made for a genuine visual and auditory spectacle.

The following year saw the 750K fitted with a much-needed upgrade to the front brake with a twin disc system. Infinitely better than the outgoing drum in the dry, the period stainless rotors, allied to the primitive friction pad material, made for some fairly scary wet weather retardation. Revised graphics lifted the previously slightly staid look and the radiator got chrome side covers instead of painted ones. GT750K models are said to be the rarest of the breed and particularly so in gold. They also present the biggest

Faults & foibles

The Suzuki GT750 is a remarkably well engineered piece of kit and unless suffering gross abuse it is capable of very substantial mileages, especially for a two-stroke.

Most of its issues are likely to be down to age, and like any stinkwheels it won't run properly if its crank seals are worn or dried out. Another seal issue that should be obvious to spot is the one fitted to the water pump. Its demise is marked by the presence of either oil emulsion in the header tank or milky oil in the gearbox.

Ham-fisted owners have been known to snap off the studs that secure the header pipes to the exhaust ports. Repairs can be expensive and will be protracted as the entire top end normally has to come off. And while we're in this vicinity, note that the one-piece barrel is well known for seizing onto its through-studs.

Additional costs may be further encountered on the earlier models that run seals between the downpipe and silencer interface. They often take a set and don't reseal properly after dismantling.

Transmission-wise the bike is normally good, but the steel band around the clutch basket can break, causing primary drive mayhem. Back in the day, many less than reputable dealers sold unsuitable industrial drive chain for bike use, and many a GT750 has suffered around the output sprocket as a result of a breaking chain.

Many owners have fitted electronic ignition to dispense with three set of points/coils and the associated hassle of gapping and timing. It's suggested that Suzuki only dropped the TCI system from the prelaunch models in order to keep the price down!



Above: The later machines wore more conventional silencers and boasted a set of twinned discs to cope with the stopping. Although they have no great rep for happy handling, keen riders can crack on...

Below: Suzuki's GT750 – aka the Radical Kettle – boasts its own club, the Kettle Club. This GT750M was snapped at one of its events

challenge today in terms of an authentic restoration, as some key parts are unique to the bike. 1974 saw the start of major revisions in an effort to keep it current and selling. Kawasaki's Z1 was moving off the showroom floors in huge volumes and Honda kept churning out CB750s at an alarming rate. Less busy paint and graphics, the deletion of the fork gaiters, revision to the bulbous side panels and a subtle styling refresh all enhanced the bikes' cosmetics.

Elsewhere, Suzuki had taken note of the criticism and comments collated by dealers who had listened to customers' requests. Subtle tweaks increased power and the carburettors were changed. The early bike had run 32mm slide carbs with individual cables running from a splitter block. The new bike had 40mm CV carbs, something supremely rare in the two-stroke world. The real reason for the change of carbs was probably in response to ever-tightening

emissions regulations in the key US market. The happy fact that fuel consumption improved was purely serendipitous.

Another series of substantial changes occurred with the exhaust system. The black end cans were deleted in favour of plain chrome silencers, and the previously much vaunted linked coupling system was dropped. Said to enhance bottom end torque – of which the Suzuki was never lacking – the downpipes now ran into their respective silencers. In reality the coupling system had always been a source of oleaginous seepage and the new system was unquestionably easier and cheaper to make. This ECT (Exhaust Coupling Tube) was still present on some L models in certain markets until stocks were totally used up.

Suzuki was watching production costs and reducing parts proliferation; the headlamp bowl and brackets were now chromed instead of painted



SUZUKI GT750



and the radiator fan was now an optional extra. One small fop to frippery that would run across many larger bikes in the Suzuki family was the addition of a digital gear indicator, which many saw as an unnecessary embellishment.

For 1975 the GT750M took on the role of what we'd now call a sports tourer. The porting of the engine was revised to release more power, ignition timing was revised and for the first time the unique motor had a distinct powerband rather than a fluid wave of torque. Changes to gearing and the exhaust internals maximised power, and the previously deleted ECT allowed the routing of the exhaust system to be lifted a little, thus aiding handling. Sales of the M model in particular were strong, and it was just as well. Suzuki was reaping the whirlwind that was the appalling cost of the RE5's ►

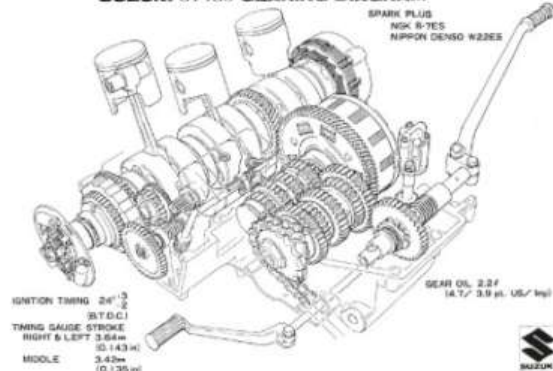
■ **Right:** The end was in sight...

■ **Below:** Simplicity is the key. This is how simple the mechanism is beneath the complicated exterior

■ **Bottom:** The final versions of the big triple began with the civilised GT750A and pretty much everything was as sorted as it was likely to get



SUZUKI GT750 GEARING DIAGRAM



The Peer Group

The most obvious and credible rival had to have been Honda's CB750. Launched three years before the Suzuki, it proved there was a ready market for large multi-cylinder machinery. The same is also true of the BSA/Triumph triples and in many ways these were more comparable with the GT750 in so far as they were essentially 500cc twins with an extra pot grafted on.

Over the Kettle's lifetime and on into the modern classic era it has been regularly – if unfairly – paralleled against Kawasaki's H2 Mach IV. The comparison is as valid as running Yamaha's XS750 alongside Laverda's 3CE; same engine configurations but totally different target markets. No one hell bent on riding a Kawasaki 750 triple was ever going to be torn between it and the Suzuki.

Less obvious potential target buyers would have been those who had traditionally bought big parallel twins but were looking for a more sophisticated machine. In the early 70s the die-hard buyers were

beginning to move away from home grown iron. By the time the big GT was into its stride BSA had gone belly up and Triumph's triples were going through a bad patch with rapidly stretching big end bolts precipitating mechanical chaos. For many buyers reliability out-trumped patriotism any day of the week.

Outside of Japan the obvious rivals came from Germany and Italy but arrived with a substantial price penalty. BMW's 750 was still, to a large degree, perceived as an 'old fart's bike' even if it was a truly stunning tourer of outstanding quality. Ducati could offer its 750 L-twins, but the UK dealer support and spares situation were notoriously fickle and the bikes had a certain fragility about them. Moto Guzzi's sublime transverse 750s were more than a match for the Kettle's long legs, but the presence of a shaft drive put many off. Ultimately, the GT750 was different enough to fascinate, cheap enough to entice, reliable to a fault and singularly unique – which are good enough reasons for its success.



The Flexi Flyers

No overview of the GT750 would be complete without reference to the racers based around the road bike. Suzuki's TR750 – aka XR11 – was produced in response to the newly-created Formula 750 race series of 1971 in a link-up between the American AMA and Britain's ACU. A year later the FIM was promoting the series, initially in a bid to showcase the big machines from leading manufacturers. With the BSA/Triumph triples initially grabbing most of the attention, Suzuki went all out to make a race bike from their road-going machine. Initially, the piston-ported motor was churning out a credible 105bhp but by 1975 this was upped to 115.

Against the original opposition power had never been an issue, but the TR750/XR11 had profound handling issues, leading to it being nicknamed The Flexi Flyer. Japan was still learning the black art that is chassis design, and although its engineers could master engines, frames were still an anathema. Not that this mattered a jot; it was all good PR. Race on Sunday, sell on Monday had never been more apposite, and the GT750's credibility was significantly enhanced. When one B. Sheene Esq. crashed spectacularly at Daytona and the finger of blame was pointed at the tyres and not the bike, Suzuki probably breathed a sigh of relief; and were then bowled over by the increase in sales of their top line bike. The reality was that the GT750 motor did a passable job but it was heavy and bulky.

When Yamaha produced the series-specific TZ750, pretty much every other machine was consigned to the bin. Little appreciable technology from the track was distilled over into the road bikes, but occasionally the odd strange thing happened. The racers sometimes utilised a cylinder head with a horizontally split water jacket but its purpose is lost somewhere in the annals of racing. When Suzuki decided the idea didn't pass muster they palmed the spare heads off onto the production floor. Several score of GT750Ks were subsequently built with these strange cylinder heads, and to this day it's a source of angst and contention with the rivet counters at bike shows.



development, and this took the focus away from developing the GT750 to its logical conclusion.

The final two years of the legendary triple were a mixed bag. 1976 saw minor tweaks, like a locking fuel cap, larger tank and a second raising of the final drive ratios. Against the odds and expectations, the GT750A would become the best-selling Kettle in the UK and Europe. Buyers who preferred a two-stroke knew they had a solid, dependable bike, with a proven record both on and off the racetrack.

The final version came the following year, with the cosmetically corporate GT750B. Satin black side panels replaced the chrome and painted ones, along with a similarly finished headlamp bowl. Indicators, tail light and even the front mudguard were aping the new heir apparent in the guise of the all new GS750 that would become the saviour of the cash-strapped company. **CBC**



■ **Top:** The journey from the first to the last of Suzuki's biggest stroker triple was one of steady development, rather than wild engineering changes. From first (above) to last (below) the kettle always offered an alternative

■ **Left:** The final Kettle, the GT750B, was changed only cosmetically, mostly to line up alongside the company's great new hope – the new GS750, a conventional four.



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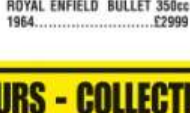
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BSA A65 650cc, Star twin, 1964, tidy runner, electronic ignition fitted, £3850 ono Tel. 07802 634623 Kent



BSA A7SS 1958, 500cc, twin, green, black, show condition, V5C, £4950 Tel. 01672 513827 Wilts



BSA A10 Flash, 650cc, total rebuild, many new parts, tax/MoT, exempt TLS, front brake, excellent condition, the first to see will buy, £3950 Tel. 0115 9322897 Notts



BSA B40 SS90, 1962, rare, electronic ignition, new battery, new tyres, MoT Aug 2016, vgc, £2750 ono Tel. 01299 270743; 07866 936363 Worcs

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1956 reg MOTO RUMI SPORT, 0 miles, RUMI BICARBURATORE SUPERSPORT 125 CONCOURS this is a true concours bike and very rare as far as I am aware the only one for sale in the world! It is a pure racing bike 2 stroke, Dellorto twin carbs, 4 speed, plunger twin rear shocks, 18L tank, this one was built in 1954 and it looks new! the last one to sell went for £20k so think the price is about where it should be. £14,500



1960 reg NORTON Jubilee 250, 0 miles, stunning condition, lots of paperwork, matching numbers bike, its a great looking bike, rare and collectable, see photos, a must see bike.....£3,650



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1961 Reg AJ's Model 8 0 miles. Here we have a AJ's Model 8 350 and lots of history! Matching numbers, new rechromed rims and spokes, new exhaust, new carb plus old one, great sound and a nice runner!.....£3,699



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BSA BANTAM D7 1962, done about 1400 miles since fitted with all new bearings etc, Rex Caunt electronic ignition & 12v system, all chrome good, MoT. Tel. 01454 316146 Bristol



BSA DB32 1959/60, Gold Star, OEM Clubmans trim, with all GS equipment, five road miles, one registered owner, matching frame/engine numbers, £18,500 Tel. 02380 261852 Hampshire



BSA BANTAM Villiers, trail/trials trim, 1968, tested, free tax, 150cc or 197 to be fitted if you wish, owned since 1997, C15 front forks and swinging arm, great fun, £1450 ono Tel. 01642 711737 North Yorkshire



BSA GOLDSTAR 1958, DBD 500 Clubmans, matching numbers, buff log book, 100 percent rebuild, £25,000 Tel. 01376 325288; 07759 334885 Essex



BSA SHOOTING STAR 1961, MoT March 2016, engine rebuilt, 650cc internals, excellent one chip on mudguard, matching numbers, £4700 Tel. 01903 723658 West Sussex



BSA WM20 1945/46, spent most of its life in Malaya for the emergency then as plantation hack, bought freshly restored by me a couple of years ago now. Tel. 07801 439106 Wiltshire



FRANCIS-BARNETT Plover, 150cc, 1958, refurbished engine by Villiers, MoT & tax exempt, new chain & sprockets, other work done, phone for details, £2200 ono Tel. Derek 07594 471560



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1957 Douglas Dragonfly 350cc..... £5850



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1960 Norton Dominator 99 600.....£6250



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1960 Triumph TR6 650cc..... £6750



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1947 NORTON Model 18 500cc lovely riders bike	£5250
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NORTON COMMANDO Interstate, black, 1972, excellent condition, £6250 ono Tel. 01737 642075 Surrey



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PHOTOS BY THE MZ RIDERS' CLUB

ALTHOUGH MZ IS mostly known for the Eastern Bloc company's range of get-to-work 1960s and 70s two-strokes, some utterly up to date four-stroke models were introduced when the firm was revitalised in the mid-1990s. These include the 500cc Rotax-engined Country, alongside the Mastiff and Baghira enduro bikes and the roadster Skorpion, all of which were fitted with Yamaha's 660 engine, together with a little jewel of a bike, the RT125. In the early 2000s a 1000cc series of parallel twins was introduced. The MZ Riders' Club caters for absolutely all bikes of the marque, badged as MZ or MuZ, and a varied mix are welcome at section meetings, club runs and other events.

MZs were always an affordable option, and that's just as true in the 21st century as it was when Royal Enfield dealer Wilf Green started importing them into the UK in 1969. The Earles-forked ES150 sold for a very competitive £180 and the larger capacity ES250 'Flying Banana' Trophy was just £204. At that time MZs were made in Lower Saxony by IFA, but the factory had a long history going back to 1906. In the 1930s, DKW (IFA's predecessor) was the largest motorcycle manufacturer in the world. The marque was already well known to British enthusiasts following competition success, taking Lightweight TT titles in the mid-60s and with a string of wins in the same decade for the MZ ISDT Trophy Team. The roadgoing models – single cylinder two-strokes – were well engineered, simple to maintain and provided reliable transport.



By 1974 Motorradwerk Zschopau had attracted enough owners in the UK for those enthusiasts to launch the MZ Riders' Club.

Today there are 1000 members in the club. They enjoy a bi-monthly magazine and meet regularly in 24 local sections which extend from the north of Scotland to Kent and Cornwall, including sections in Northern Ireland and Eire. Members benefit from discounts on insurance and subscriptions to some excellent magazines (including this one!). The club provides a focal point for social activities and technical advice for anyone owning or having an interest in MZ, MuZ, Kanuni, DKW or Simson machines. Many riders join the club, develop an understanding of the bikes based on other members' experiences, and can then make an informed choice when they come to buy. As classics, MZs are rising in popularity. They are readily available and spares are cheap and plentiful, with several specialist suppliers in the UK and in Germany. The MZRC has its own dating officer, recognised by the DVLA and a technical officer who can help with advice on restoring and running an MZ.

As well as monthly meets and ride-outs, the MZRC organises camping weekends and rallies, with its AGM weekend as the highlight of the calendar. You'll find club displays at various events, so look out for them at the Stafford Show this month (and in April), and the August Classic Festival at Donington. There's a club event scheduled for almost every weekend of the year – even during January for those really hardy winter rally types.

Membership is open to all MZ enthusiasts – you don't need to own one already to join – and costs £20pa for UK and Ireland residents (or you can save a couple of quid if you opt to have the electronic version of the club publication). This also gives you affiliate membership of the Motorcycle Action Group and the National Association of Bikers with a Disability, and access to the Federation of Historic Vehicle Clubs. There's a special members-only section on the club website with classified ads and event info, and a dedicated Facebook group for sharing photos and asking quick questions in times of mechanical mishap.

Full details at mzridersclub.com **CBG**

Club guide

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British Two-Stroke Club:

britishtwostrokeclub.org.uk

Brough Superior Club:

broughsuperiorclub.com

BSA Bantam Club:

bsabantamclub.com

BSA OC:

bsaownersclub.co.uk

Bucks British & Classic MCC:

Meets at The Plough at Cadsden, Princes Risborough, Bucks every Wednesday evening. bbcmcc.freeuk.com

CBX Riders' Club (UK):

ukcbxclub.com

Christian Motorcyclists' Assoc:

cmakuk.net

Classic Racing Motorcycle Club:

crmc.co.uk

Cossack OC:

cossackownersclub.co.uk

Cotton Owners and

Enthusiasts' Club:

cottonownersclub.com

DOT Motorcycle Club:

dot-motorcycle-club.co.uk

Douglas OC:

dougasmcc.co.uk

Ducati OC (GB):

docgb.org

Dunstable OC:

dunstable.wordpress.com

Excelsior Talisman

Enthusiasts:

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Tel/fax 01494 762166.

Exeter British MCC:

exeterbritishmotorcycleclub.co.uk

Federation of Sidecar Clubs:

sidecars.org.uk

Fellowship of Christian

Motorcyclists:

fcm-bikers.co.uk

Francis-Barnett OC:

francis-barnett.co.uk

Gold Star OC:

bsagoldstarownersclub.com

Greeves Riders' Association:

greeves-riders.org.uk

Gwent Classic Trials and

Scrambles Club:

Mark Giles, 42 Picton Street, Griffithstown, Pontypool, Torfaen NP4 5HB. 01495 757930.

Harley-Davidson Riders' Club of Great Britain:

hdcrgb.org.uk

Hesketh OC:

heskethownersclub.org.uk

Highland Classic MCC:

highlandclassicmotorcycleclub.org.uk or facebook.com/highlandclassicmotorcycleclub

Honda OC:

hoc.org.uk

Honda Classic MCC:

Chairman: Kevin Richards, 40 Penton House, Hartslock Drive, Thamesmead, London SE2 9UZ. 0798 4099 473.

HYCAM:

Paul Morin, 5 Frederick Close, Cheam, Surrey SM1 2HY.

Indian Motorcycle Club of GB:

indianmotorcycle.co.uk

Indian Riders' Motorcycle Club:

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Italian IMOC/GB:

Membership enquiries: Phil Cody, 4 Heys Farm Cottages, Heys Lane, Romley, Stockport SK6 4NS.

Japanese Classic MCC:

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Jawa/CZ OMC of GB & Ireland:

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Kawasaki Triples Club:

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Maico OC:

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Morgan 3-Wheeler Club:

mtwc.co.uk

Morini Riders' Club:

morini-riders-club.com

Moto Guzzi Club GB:

motoguzziclub.co.uk

Moto Rumi Club:

motorumiclub.co.uk

Motor Cycling Club (MCC):

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Cyclemotor Club:

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National Sprint Association:

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Norman Cycles Club:

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Norton OC:

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NSU OC:

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Oregon Vintage Motorecyclists:

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Panther OC:

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pre65.co.uk

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pemc.co.uk

Register of Unusual Microcars:

rumcars.org

Rotary OC:

David Cameron, Dunbar, Ingatestone Road, Highwood, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 3QU. nortonrotary.org.uk

Royal Enfield & Enfield India:

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Rudge Enthusiasts:

rudge.co.uk

Scottish Classic MCC:

scottishclassicmotorcycleclub.com

moonfruit.com

Scott OC:

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SOHC/4 OC:

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South Wales Sunbeam MCC:

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Sunbeam MCC:

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Fellowship (S7 & S8):

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Club:

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The 59 Club:

The Swift Centre, 387A Barking Road, Plaistow, London E13 8AL. the59club.org.uk

The Classic Bikers' Club:

classicbikersclub.com

The Invalid Carriage Register:

<http://invalidcarriageregister.wordpress.com>

Thumper Club:

thumperclub.com

TR3OC (Triples, BSA & Triumph):

<http://tr3oc.co.uk>

Triton OC:

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Triumph Dayt-owners:

<http://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/TriumphDayt-owners>

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TT Supporters' Club:

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Vincent/HRD OC:

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VJMC (Vintage Japanese Motorecycle Club):

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These days most owners' clubs provide immediate online assistance as well as extensive archives and libraries. For a modest annual membership fee, most groups provide access to rare spares, detailed model information, help with registration and machine dating, and a full calendar of club runs, rallies and social events.

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Audrey Hepburn. Now, who'll fix the leaks from the Thunderbird?

IT'S EASY TO get excited about a motorcycle. Almost all motorcycles. Some more than others, but you get the drift. Let's not go into which are the more exciting motorcycles, either. The world needs more tranquillity, less angst and argument. Did you hear me even mention Nortons? No, you did not.

It's maybe less easy to get excited about parts of motorcycles, and again some parts are less exciting than others. Obviously, I can speak only personally, but I am regularly thrilled almost to the point of self-immolation by the subtle bend of the exhaust header pipe on a BSA A10. Not some ill-proportioned pattern part that looks more like a leftover from re-plumbing a drain, but the real, original, 3D swoop that noble engineers and draughtspersons wept over back in about 1946. There was, after all, nothing else to do in Birmingham back then but contemplate exhaust pipes. Some things do not change.

It's even less easy to become gripped by other parts, be they individual components or decently complicated assemblies, although no one who is unmoved by the sight of a pre-Monobloc Amal and its attendant curly piece of copper piping gently weeping together in a fine cloud of petrol vapour should be permitted to ride anything more exciting than a VéloSoleX on a damp day in February.

This may come as a teeny tiny surprise, but I have found myself obsessed by stands. Motorcycle stands, not displays at events, even though they can apparently muster fans of their own. No, I have been so spoiled by the efficiency of the stands I've been honoured to use in recent times that I had completely forgotten how steamingly irritating a badly designed stand can be. Did I mention Nortons? I will now, and I will be ungenerous, too. I will hold back none of my loathing of the centrestand on the last featherbed Norton I was compelled to ride. Who did that? Who designed such a flimsy, narrow, tottering, useless piece of scrap?

I'd dismounted from a Mk3 Commando (my own, blush, blush) after kicking down what our American pals refer to as a kickstand but which stalwart Brits call a sidestand. It was easy. Catch the end of the stand with the toe of the left boot and swing it out until – donk – it's in position. Lean over motorcycle until its weight is taken by the stand, dismount. Look cool. It is impossible not to look cool after dismounting from a Commando, although I do try, lest non-Commando riders feel even more disadvantaged. Lift machine from sidestand, place right foot on the centrestand extension, push the stand feet to terra hopefully firma, and pull the bike gently backwards. It lifts itself onto the stand. Perfect. Kick away the sidestand, in case



FRANK WESTWORTH

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

Is the least over-rated component of a motorcycle its stand?

some passing fool impales themselves and attempts legal action to compensate for their idiocy.

This does not work with a featherbed Norton like the last one I attempted to be professionally pleasant about. Not only had some misguided person with a very small brain replaced its noble 350cc single-cylindrical engine with something more than twice the capacity originating from somewhere horridly closer to Coventry than Brum, but they'd fitted one of those desperate aftermarket sidestands that are intended to clamp to a lower frame rail. Yeah, right. Like most of its breed, when fitted by persons deficient in the brainpower dept, this needed to be welded. It was so rubbish that its owner warned me against using it, lest I deposit his glittery fandango in a leaking heap on his drive. Or worse, in a layby or other suitably handsome Midlands backdrop while I attempted to make it look nice in the photos.

So off I hopped, flailed around with a toe in a doomed attempt at locating the centrestand. I knew it had one, because it had been standing on it when I collected the bike. In the end I needed to squat down and fish out the (oily, horrid) thing with my fingers. My fingers! What is this madness? And why in a modern age?

Riding the bike was vile anyway, so...

Time passed, gently, as time does, and I found myself sitting astride a Moto Guzzi, one of the quaintly-named 'small block' V-twins. Great bikes. Robust centrestand too, so I can write nice words about it. But not, gentle reader, about its sidestand. I had forgotten the 1980s age of safety interference. I had forgotten that the 1980s saw the rearing of patronising interference with the noble pursuit of motorcycling in the name of health and safety. It was (and still may be) demanded of motorcycles that they would be unrideable with the sidestand down. Why? Who would even try? I tried it once. It's not fun. It is something you try only once. This is Darwinism in action.

The Guzzi's sidestand is of the suicidestand variety. I'd forgotten about those, happily. You put toe to stand, extend leg, stand hits ground, you lean the bike, stand up, sidestand flies back up and the bike falls in a crashy heap, usually in front of its previously proud owner. Ducatis used a similar system, beloved of parts suppliers everywhere.

And when was the last time you read a report on a motorcycle – ancient or modern – that included a decent appraisal of its stands? Huh? Many modern motorcycles lack a centrestand completely. How can this be? With motorcycles, as in much else, the devil is in the detail. **CBC**

"Off I hopped, and flailed around with a toe in a doomed attempt at locating the centrestand. I knew it had one, because it had been standing on it when I collected the bike..."

WHO IS FRANK WESTWORTH?

Frank Westworth is the editor of *RealClassic* magazine, the latest in a long series of publications that began in 1982 when he was bullied into producing *The Jampot*, the previously excellent magazine of the AJS & Matchless OC. He was also founding editor of *Classic Bike Guide* and has returned as a penance. Or something. He has a mysterious obsession with riding obscure and elderly motorcycles, which he does very slowly...

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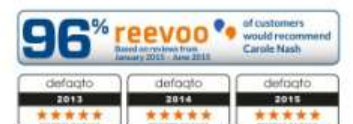
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